THE GREAT ARABIAN SWORD OF THE SAUDIS

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Abstract Introduction

This book presents a comprehensive examination of Saudi Arabia's military history, tracing the evolution of warfare, leadership, and ideology from the foundation of the First Saudi State in the mid-18th century to the complex regional rivalries of Saudi-Yemeni wars in the 20th century. Drawing upon primary Arabic sources, Ottoman and British archives, and modern academic studies, this work explores how the early Wahhabi campaigns transformed the Arabian Peninsula and set the stage for the formation of a unified Saudi realm The study is structured chronologically, encompassing every major conflict in which the Saudi states were involved including the Wahhabi-Ottoman wars, Qajar–Wahhabi clashes the conquests of the Hijaz, the Saudi–Rashidi wars, and the internal revolts such as the Ikhwan uprising It concludes with the geopolitical transformations of the modern era when Saudi Arabia emerged as a leading Arab power navigating ideological struggles in it history The book is the result of a multi-disciplinary collaboration between six historians, each specializing in a distinct era of Saudi history Ahmed Al-Mansour expert on the First Saudi State and its expansionist campaigns Layla Al-Harbi specialist on the Second Saudi State and Najdi-Ottoman relations; William Carter, historian of the late ottoman empire and British Gulf periods Emily Thompson researcher of early 20th-century Arabian military reform and the unification of the Kingdom; Ivan Petrov specialist on Wahhabi campaigns in ottoman territories and Salim Al-Busaidi, historian of the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf maritime conflicts Together, their collective research provides a continuous contextualized narrative of Saudi Arabia's wars from tribal mobilization to modern state strategy

Introduction

The history of the Arabian Peninsula is, at its heart, a history of struggle a struggle for unity, faith, and survival in one of the most contested regions of the world. This book, Saudi Wars: From the First Saudi State to the Arab Cold War, seeks to chronicle over two centuries of military and political transformation that shaped not only Saudi Arabia but the broader Middle East.

The narrative begins with the rise of the First Saudi State under Imam Muhammad ibn Saud and the reformist movement led by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, whose religious and political alliance unleashed a series of campaigns that redrew the map of Arabia. It continues through the destruction and rebirth of the Saudi emirates, the wars with the Ottomans, Egyptians, and Persians, the unification of the Arabian Peninsula under King Abdulaziz Al Saud, and finally, the emergence of modern Saudi Arabia as a regional power amid the ideological rivalries of the Arab Cold War. each era of this story is presented through the lens of a historian whose expertise illuminates its context and complexity Ahmed Al-Mansour reconstructs the early Wahhabi wars, highlighting the balance between faith and military innovation that characterized the First Saudi State. Layla Al-Harbi examines the Second Saudi State's internal struggles and its

confrontations with Ottoman-backed rivals. William Carter provides insight into the twilight of the Ottoman presence in Arabia and the shifting British influence along the Gulf coast. Emily Thompson explores the military campaigns of unification under Ibn Saud, from the conquest of the Hijaz to the Ikhwan revolt. Ivan Petrov situates Saudi Arabia within the broader Cold War, analyzing its ideological contest with Egypt and regional allies. Finally, Salim Al-Busaidi contributes deep research on the maritime and tribal dimensions of conflict that shaped the Gulf's frontier politics Together, their work combines meticulous archival research with balanced analysis, offering both Saudi and global readers a detailed understanding of how warfare forged the kingdom's identity. The book's methodology integrates Arabic chronicles, Ottoman reports, British diplomatic correspondences, and modern scholarly interpretations, allowing each conflict to be examined within its political, religious, and strategic dimensions Saudi Wars is not merely a chronicle of battles; it is a study of transformation how a tribal confederation grew into a centralized state, how ideology evolved into diplomacy, and how the echoes of early wars continued to shape Saudi Arabia's modern regional role.

Sheikhdom of Diriyah

The town of Al Diriyah was founded by Mani' bin Rabi'a Al-Muraidi, which he called al-Diriyah after the town from which they came from, al-Diriyah a town or a small village located near al-Qatif and it is attributed to their grandfather Dara Areas near Wadi Hanifa are Ghusaybah and Al-Mulaybid. When Mani' died his son Rabi'a bin Mani succeeded him, and he headed the people of the country and the population of Al-Dir'iya multiplied His neighbours, the Yazid family, evacuated them from their villages and attached them to the lands of Diriyah, and after him his son Ibrahim bin Musa ruled after him, then his son Markhan bin Ibrahim, and after the death of Markhan, his two sons Rabi'a and Muqrin ruled jointly, and the emirate was passed after them to their sons, Wataban bin Rabi'a bin Markhan and Markhan bin Muqrin bin Markhan. Then Nasser bin Muhammad bin Watban, then Muhammad bin Muqrin, then Ibrahim bin Watban, and Idris bin Watban, until the days of Musa bin Rabi'a bin Watban were in the year 1121 AH / 1709; it was taken over by Saud Al-Awwal bin Muhammad bin Muqrin, and he died in 1137 AH / 1726, and after his death, the oldest man in the family, Zaid bin Markhan bin Watban, succeeded and was killed in 1139 AH / 1726. Muhammad bin Saud bin Muhammad bin Muqrin assumed the emirate of Diriyah andlater became the first imam of the first Saudi state

Diriyah pact

The Diriyah pact was an agreement signed between the Emir of Diriyah, Imam Muhammad bin Saud, and Imam Muhammad bin Abdul-Wahhab in the year 1744 The two imams agreed to call for correcting the people's faith from the polytheism, heresies, and superstitions attached to it, by returning to what Muhammad was upon, and carrying out the duty of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong After the pact, the reform movement began its work, and the Salafist call spread and became widely influential with supporters throughout the Arabian Peninsula and outside it. The pact is considered the basis on which the modern Saudi state was established

Diriyah expedition to Riyadh

Uyayna, Manfuha, and Huraymila settlements voluntarily joined the Saudi government, later joined by Dhurma and Shaqra. The relationship between Riyadh and Diriyah before the establishment of the Saudi state was good and normal. Daham bin Dawas had a friendship and loyalty to Muhammad bin Saud due to his previous favor. However, the situation changed after Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab moved to Diriyah. Sources indicate that when he saw the expansion of the state and the spread of Ibn Abdul Wahhab's call, he took a negative stance. He began to persecute those who followed the call from the people of Riyadh. The main reason for the Saudi state's desire to break Daham's influence was his attack on some countries that joined the state, such as Manfuha During the reign of Imam Muhammad bin Saud and his son Abdulaziz, the Saudi state engaged in approximately thirty-five raids against Daham bin Dawas in Riyadh, spanning 28 years, during which about four thousand from both sides were killed.[1] The end of these battles was in the year 1773, when Daham fled after the "Hudaym al-Marqab incident". Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad entered Riyadh, and his leadership was entrusted to Prince Abdullah bin Muqrin bin Muhammad bin Muqrin The Diriyah expedition to Riyadh, waged by the Emirate of Diriyah against the tribes of Riyadh for an expansion it lasted more than 28 years and mark the beginning of the expansion of the first Saudi state Muhammad bin Saud Al Muqrin Started to assemble his rule over the regions of Diriyah He managed to defeat some rival tribes in Arabia like the Battle of Ajman which killing of 50 Ajman and the escape of survivors from Ajman to Najran where the Yami tribes are located

The Saudi-Bani Khalid War (1764-1765)

In the year 1177 AH / 1763 CE while Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad bin Saud was returning from Sudair to Diriyah, he received word while in the town of Raghbah that the Ajman tribe had assaulted a group from the Subai' tribe. He pursued the Ajman to a location called Qadhlah. The Ajman then called for reinforcements from the people of Najran and the Yam tribes. The ruler of Najran, Hassan bin Hibatullah Al-Makrami, responded to their plea and began preparing for war. He also informed the ruler of Al-Ahsa, Aray'ar bin Dujayn a known enemy of Wahhabis of his intention to march against the people of Diriyah, and they formed an alliance to jointly attack it, agreeing to meet at Al-Ha'ir. The two armies met in the year 1178 AH / 1764 CE, and the forces of Diriyah were defeated. A settlement was reached to exchange prisoners, and the Najran army withdrew. Historian Al-Othaimeen attributed Al-Makrami's support for the Ajman The Battle of Al-Ha'ir is considered one of the most important battles in the history of the First Saudi State due to the significant events it involved, which had a major impact on the course of developments in the Najd region

Aray'ar bin Dujayn led a major campaign in the year 1178 AH / 1765 CE, in alliance with Hassan bin Hibatullah Al-Makrami, the leader of Najran, Dahham bin Dawwas, the Emir of Riyadh, and several other emirs of Najd. Diriyah suffered heavy blows from the forces of Najran during the Battle of Al-Ha'ir, which nearly led to the fall of the emerging Saudi state. In response, Imam Muhammad bin Saud and Imam Muhammad bin Abdulwahhab negotiated a peace agreement with the leader of Bani Khalid who then halted his attacks. However, Aray'ar's forces continued advancing until they reached Diriyah and

laid siege to the city for an entire month Later, in 1188 AH / 1774 CE, Aray'ar launched another campaign, this time on the Qassim region, successfully expelling Abdullah bin Hassan and appointing Rashid Al-Duraibi Al Abu Alyan in his place. He intended to launch an attack on Diriyah afterward, but he died two months after withdrawing from Buraidah. In Al-Ahsa, following internal conflicts among the leaders of Banu Khalid and after the death of Aray'ar bin Dujayn, power passed to Sa'dun bin Aray'ar The failure of the siege of Diriyah made Arir bin Djin to withdraw from Diriyah.

During the turbulent years of the First Saudi State, central Arabia witnessed constant unrest as local emirs and tribes either resisted or submitted to the growing influence of Diriyah. Among the significant regional powers at the time was Zaid bin Zamil, the Emir of Al-Dilam, a strategically located town south of Riyadh. Initially caught in the middle of shifting alliances, Zaid's rule came under pressure as the Saudi expansion advanced through Najd. After suffering heavy losses in previous confrontations, Zaid chose to ally himself with the Emir of Najran, a traditional opponent of the Saudi cause, hoping to resist further Saudi encroachment

This alliance triggered what became known as the Second Battle of Al-Ha'ir, in which Saudi forces once again faced off against a coalition of Najran's army and Yam tribes, backed by Zaid bin Zamil. Despite the formidable opposition, the Saudis emerged victorious, managing to defeat the allied forces and bring Al-Dilam under their control. The success was significant not only for its military implications but also for consolidating Saudi power over southern Najd and severing potential routes of support from the south

Following the battle, Zaid bin Zamil retreated to Al-Dilam, where he fortified the town and prepared for a siege, determined to resist Saudi authority. The resulting Siege of Al-Dilam was intense and prolonged, but eventually, Zaid was defeated. The town was brought fully under Saudi control, marking a turning point in the campaign to unify the Najd region. As a political move to stabilize the area, the Saudi leadership appointed Sulayman ibn Ufaysan as the new emir of Al-Dilam, ensuring loyalty to Diriyah and cutting off any further opposition from the town

The events surrounding Zaid bin Zamil and the conflict for Al-Dilam highlight the complex network of tribal politics, alliances, and military strategy that shaped the Saudi state's early years. Though Zaid's resistance was determined, it ultimately fell before the growing power and religious legitimacy of the Saudi–Wahhabi alliance, which continued its expansion across central Arabia

The Saudi Campaigns in Al-Qatif and Tarout

In the year 1206 AH / 1792 CE, during the ongoing war between the First Saudi State and the Banu Khalid Emirate, Saud bin Abdulaziz led a military campaign toward the Qatif region. He began by besieging the town of Saihat, which soon fell into his hands. He then advanced to occupy the nearby villages of Anak, Qudaih, and Al-Awamiyah. Saud eventually laid siege to Qatif's main port, lifting it only after the local population paid a hefty tribute of 3,000 gold coins. However, the goal of this campaign was not the full annexation of Qatif at that time. Rather, it was a strategic move aimed at subduing a region that had shown strong resistance to Saudi authority, as the final confrontation with the Banu Khalid had yet to be resolved. Following the fall of Al-Ahsa in 1208 AH / 1794 CE and the dissolution of the independent Al-Humaid emirate of the Banu Khalid, only scattered pockets of resistance remained in Qatif and its surroundings. While Najdi

sources largely neglected to mention the details of Qatif's final fall after the 1792 campaign, the author of "Lama' al-Shihab fi Sirat Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab stated that Qatif was conquered after Al-Ahsa and described the manner in which it occurred, though without providing an exact date Once the Saudi state had fully secured its control over the lands of Banu Khalid, Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad dispatched a large expeditionary force numbering 8,000 fighters, led by Ibrahim ibn Ufaysan, to Qatif. The region was then under the command of Abdullah bin Sulayman al-Muhayshuri al-Khalidi, while Ahmad bin Ghanim al-Qatifi held authority over the local population. Ibrahim's forces first descended on Saihat, south of Qatif. In response, Abdullah bin Sulayman dispatched a contingent under his son Ali, resulting in a battle that ended with a Saudi defeat and Ibn Ufaysan's retreat to Dhahran Despite this setback, Ibn Ufaysan began launching raids on the outskirts of Qatif, prompting Abdullah bin Sulayman to lead his full Khalidi force in a counteroffensive, relying on Ahmad bin Ghanim and his men to defend the town and its fortress. The two armies clashed near Al-Jarudiyah, adjacent to Qatif. After twelve days of heavy fighting, Abdullah bin Sulayman was forced to retreat. Saudi forces then cut off his return path, forcing him to flee toward Taruot Island, where he and his remaining fighters took refuge in its fortified castle. Upon hearing this, Ahmad bin Ghanim fortified himself and his group within the Qatif citadel. Ibn Ufaysan soon demanded the surrender of the fortress, to which Ahmad initially agreed. However, fearing retribution from the Khalidi soldiers inside the stronghold, Ahmad hesitated. As a result, Ibn Ufaysan stormed the fortress by force, seized Qatif, and executed many of its inhabitants. Ahmad bin Ghanim and his faction managed to escape unharmed.

Following the fall of Qatif, Ibrahim ibn Ufaysan dispatched his brother Fahd (or Fahrad) with 2,000 men to confront Abdullah bin Sulayman in Tarout, while he remained in Qatif to prevent a possible uprising. Fahd's forces camped near Tarout and began raiding its outskirts. When initial attempts to breach the fortress failed and many of his men were killed, Fahd requested reinforcements. Ibrahim sent an additional 1,000 troops, but even with these, Fahd's assault on Tarout Castle failed. The Khalidi defenders held firm, and Fahd retreated to his previous camp

In a sudden and unexpected move, Abdullah bin Sulayman launched a counterattack against Fahd's camp, inflicting a decisive defeat on the Saudis, killing 200 men and capturing their supplies. Ibrahim ibn Ufaysan, still fortified in Qatif, informed Imam Abdulaziz of the situation. The Imam responded by reaffirming Ibn Ufaysan's command and instructing him not to be drawn into a trap by Abdullah bin Sulayman, urging him to remain entrenched in Qatif

Reinforcements were soon dispatched under the leadership of Salih bin Rashid Al-Dosari, with orders that Ibn Ufaysan lead the new army while Al-Dosari remained in Qatif to secure the town. Ibn Ufaysan obeyed and marched once more toward Tarout. After a 21-day siege, the Saudis successfully stormed the island and seized control. Abdullah bin Sulayman fled to Al-Muntafiq, having lost most of his men in the final confrontation.

Dating the Fall of Qatif and Tarout

The historian who authored "Lama' al-Shihab fi Sirat Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab" was the only one to provide a detailed account of the Saudi conquests of Qatif and Tarout, though he did not specify the exact dates. However, he confirmed that the events took place during the reign of Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad (d. 1218 AH / 1803 CE) and after the fall of Al-Ahsa in 1208 AH / 1794 CE

The Fall of the Al-Humaid Emirate and the Saudi Conquest of Al-Ahsa (1721–1796)

When Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad Al Saud assumed leadership of the First Saudi State, the Emirate of Al-Ahsa was under the control of the Al-Humaid clan from the Banu Khalid tribe. Tensions between Diriyah and the Banu Khalid had begun early on. In 1133 AH / 1721 CE, Sa'dun bin Muhammad bin Ghurayr Al-Humaid spent the summer in Najd and raided Diriyah, then ruled by Saud bin Muhammad, father of the First Saudi State's founder. However, the people of Diriyah mounted a strong resistance, reportedly killing many of Sa'dun's men, as recorded by the historian Ibn Bishr. The First Saudi State was established in 1157 AH / 1744 CE, and its rapid military and religious expansion soon posed a serious threat to the influence of Al-Humaid and their dominance in the eastern region. The Saudis' rise was particularly evident in Najd, especially after the annexation of Al-Uyaynah, a former ally of Al-Humaid. In response, Aray'ar bin Dujayn, the Emir of Al-Humaid, organized a large campaign in 1172 AH / 1759 CE, leading his forces deep into Najd and camping near Al-Jubaylah. The townspeople, having fortified their defenses in advance, resisted fiercely. Aray'ar's forces failed to capture the town, and additional detachments sent to Huraymila also suffered defeat. Demoralized by his troops' retreat, Aray'ar withdrew back to Al-Ahsa In 1176 AH / 1762 CE, during the reign of his father, Abdulaziz bin Muhammad launched a raid into two towns in Al-Ahsa, killing several men and seizing weapons and supplies. By then, the Saudis had gained full control over the Al-'Aridh region in central Najd, their political power now firmly established. This expansion came at the expense of surrounding powers especially Al-Humaid, whose grip on their own tribal base had begun to weaken Aray'ar prepared once again to suppress the Saudis. During this preparation, a new threat emerged: the Emir of Najran, who was drawn into conflict after receiving appeals from the Ajman tribe. He advanced toward Diriyah at the head of a large army in Rabi' al-Akhir 1178 AH / early 1764 CE, but later withdrew. Undeterred, Aray'ar continued his campaign, accompanied by regional tribal opponents of the Saudis, and laid siege to Diriyah for nearly a month. Nevertheless, his campaign failed, and he returned to Al-Ahsa In 1198 AH / 1784 CE, Saud bin Abdulaziz launched a targeted raid on the town of Al-'Uyun in Al-Ahsa, further pressuring the weakening Banu Khalid authority.

The Road to Conquest: (1788–1794)

Following the 1784 raid, Imam Abdulaziz and his son Saud began seriously considering the annexation of Al-Ahsa. By 1202 AH / 1788 CE, the balance of power had tilted decisively in favor of the Saudis. Al-Humaid's persistent opposition, their alliances with external forces, and internal divisions within their emirate all contributed to their vulnerability. A leadership dispute emerged among the Banu Khalid, leading to Sa'dun bin Aray'ar Al-Humaid seeking refuge in Diriyah after being ousted by Duwaihis bin Aray'ar That same year, Saud journeyed to Al-Dahnā' desert to monitor the situation in Al-Ahsa, while Sulayman bin Ufaysan raided the town of Al-Jishah and the port of Al Uqayrbboth located in Al-Ahsa In 1203 AH / 1789 CE, Saud led another campaign into Al-Ahsa, this time accompanied by defectors from the Banu Khalid. However, suspicions about the loyalty of these Khalidi tribesmen led to a short skirmish, and Saud withdrew.

Later that year, he returned and laid siege to Al-Mubarraz, where a firefight broke out. He then attacked Al-Fudul, killing around 300 men.
The Battle of Guraymil (1204 AH / 1790 CE) In 1204 AH / 1790 C Saud led a large army that confronted the Banu Khalid at Guraymil, near Al-Ahsa. The Saudi forces decisively defeated Al-Humaid's army, seizing a large cache of wealth and killing many soldiers. Several leaders fled to Qatar and Zubarah, and Saud installed Zayd bin Aray'ar Al-Humaid as the Saudi-appointed governor of the region The Battle of Al-Shayt (1207 AH / 1793 CE)
In 1207 AH / 1793 CE, a rebellion broke out within the Banu Khalid. They revolted against Zayd bin Aray'ar and his brothers, accusing them of murdering Abdulmuhsin bin Sardah Al-Humaid and aligning with the Saudis. Barak bin Abdulmuhsin Sardah was proclaimed emir and began launching raids to prove his power. His defiance drew Saudi intervention. Imam Abdulaziz dispatched Saud once again, resulting in the Battle of Al-Shayt, where the Saudis achieved a decisive victory. This battle marked the final collapse of Banu Khalid's dominance in the eastern Arabian Peninsula.

In Sha'ban 1207 AH, representatives from Al-Ahsa approached Saud, requesting his arrival and pledging allegiance. Saud entered the region's capital, was welcomed by the people, and implemented administrative reforms. He appointed Muhammad Al-Hamli as the new emir of Al-Ahsa.

Rebellions and Final Annexation (1794–1796)

A month after Saud's departure, the people of Al-Ahsa rebelled, killing Saudi preachers and officers. Saud responded by launching a new campaign, capturing several villages and then marching on Al-Mubarraz, where Zayd bin Aray'ar had regrouped. After several skirmishes and defeats, Zayd fled eastward. The Saudis then targeted Jubail, killing many of its defenders.

Saudi forces besieged the region, pressuring the population into surrender. The locals negotiated through Barak bin Abdulmuhsin, demanding the withdrawal of Saud's forces in exchange for handing over Zayd. Saud agreed. Barak traveled to Diriyah to pledge loyalty to Imam Abdulaziz and return with formal recognition. However, the people of Al-Ahsa reneged on the agreement and denied Barak entry. He fought back, captured Al-Hufuf, entered Al-Mubarraz, and took control as the Saudi-appointed emir By 1208 AH / 1794 CE, the independent Al-Humaid Emirate of Al-Ahsa was abolished, and the region was officially absorbed into the territory of the First Saudi State.
In Ramadan 1210 AH / 1796 CE, another rebellion erupted in Al-Ahsa. The Saudi commander Ibn Ufaysan led a force to suppress it and offered the rebels safety upon surrender. Later that year, Saud launched a fresh campaign in response to repeated uprisings and imposed severe penalties Campaigns in Eastern Al-Ahsa
Though most of Al-Ahsa had been subdued, its eastern region and Qatif remained outside Saudi control. Saud returned to the eastern frontier and launched an attack against Ibn Hamad, the local ruler. After storming several villages, he laid siege to Ibn Hamad's fortified castle until it fell. The exact date of this operation is unknown, but it marked the final step in the consolidation of the eastern territories under Saudi rule

Ibn Afaysan's Invasion of Kuwait (1793)

In 1793 (1207 AH) the First Saudi State extended its military reach beyond central Arabia, launching a daring expedition against Kuwait, a rising maritime emirate aligned with the British Empire and the Ottoman-backed Banu Khalid. This strategic move came amid the broader Saudi campaign to assert dominance over the eastern Arabian coast and neutralize pockets of resistance that remained sympathetic to Ottoman interests or hostile to Wahhabi influence Under the command of the seasoned general Ibrahim ibn Afaysan, the Saudi forces advanced toward Kuwait, aiming to disrupt its growing alliance with the British and assert Diriyah's influence over the vital ports of the northern Gulf. The Saudi troops demonstrated superior mobility and desert warfare tactics, pressuring Kuwaiti defenses and testing the resolve of its leadership. For the first time, Kuwait faced the military weight of the Najdi power that had already dismantled Banu Khalid rule in Al-Ahsa Though the campaign did not culminate in the permanent occupation of Kuwait the Saudi forces inflicted significant disruption, sending a clear message that the First Saudi State would no longer tolerate British-Ottoman encroachment near its eastern frontier. The withdrawal that followed was a decision, preserving Saudi strength for larger objectives in Al-Qatif, Tarout, and the consolidation of their gains in Al-Ahsa Despite the eventual Saudi retreat, the invasion marked a symbolic indecisive for Diriyah by projecting power far into the Gulf region and shaking the confidence of smaller coastal emirates. It signaled that the Saudi state was no longer a landlocked desert power but a regional force capable of challenging foreign-backed allies and altering the political landscape of Arabia’s coastline the British was astonished by the new political-religious movement in Arabia was discovered by the British before During The Wahhabi incursion into a A British Outpost supposed In Kuwait called Al Qurain this lead that The British Observe The Saudis state movements in Arabia and appointed William Drury and Thomas Keith to keep an eye on the Wahhabis even the French appointed vassière a French commander in Oman

The Iraqi Campaign Against Tanuma (1786)

In 1201 AH / 1786 CE, the simmering tensions between the First Saudi State and Ottoman-aligned powers in southern Iraq erupted into open hostility. The Emir of Al-Muntafiq, a powerful tribal confederation in southern Iraq under Ottoman suzerainty, mobilized a massive force drawn from the tribes of Al-Muntafiq, as well as fighters from Al-Majara, Al-Zubayr, the Bedouins of Shammar, Ghālib, and Tayy. With this diverse and heavily armed coalition, he launched a bold and violent campaign into central Najd, aiming to punish the Saudis for their growing influence and recent raids in eastern Arabia The Iraqi-led forces advanced deep into Saudi territory and launched a brutal assault on the town of Tanuma, capturing it by force and committing a horrific massacre that came to be known as the Massacre of Tanuma. Many of the town's inhabitants were slain, and the raid sent shockwaves throughout the region. Emboldened by this early success, the invading forces then laid siege to the city of Buraidah, a key Saudi stronghold in the Qassim region However, just as the siege intensified, unrest erupted back in the lands of Al-Muntafiq. Fearing rebellion or instability at home, the Emir was forced to lift the siege and withdraw his army, leaving Buraidah unconquered but deeply scarred This campaign marked a turning point in the Saudi-Iraqi confrontation. Far from intimidating the First Saudi State, the massacre and aggression hardened Saudi

resolve. The attack became a direct catalyst for deeper conflict between Diriyah and the Emirate of Al-Muntafiq, as well as with the Mamluks of Iraq, who ruled on behalf of the weakening Ottoman Empire in Baghdad In response, Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad sent an official letter to Suleiman Pasha the Great, the Ottoman-appointed governor of Baghdad. Enclosed with the letter was a copy of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab's treatise The Book of Tawheed (Monotheism) which is God's Right upon His Servants calling upon the governor to assemble the scholars of Baghdad to examine the work and embrace its teachings. However Suleiman Pasha mocked the request and responded dismissively rejecting the reformist Wahhabi message and belittling its significance.From the perspective of the First Saudi State, this rejection solidified their view that Iraq had become a "Land of War (Dār Ḥarb) a territory in opposition to Islam as defined by their religious doctrine. The Iraqi campaign, and the massacre that accompanied it, thus helped justify a broader Saudi policy of armed resistance and expansion into the southern Iraqi frontier, setting the stage for future battles and ideological confrontations between Najd and the Ottoman-controlled provinces of Iraq

Saudi invasion of Southern Iraq (1797)

In a decisive military maneuver, Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz led a bold offensive in 1897 targeting the Al-Dhafeer tribe in the Al-Hujrah region near the southern borders of Iraq. This campaign marked a significant turning point in the Saudi military strategy, as the First Saudi State was now confident enough to carry the war across the border into Ottoman-held southern Iraq.

Following the firm consolidation of Saudi rule in Al-Ahsa, the leadership in Diriyah saw an opportunity to confront their long-standing enemies in the north the Emirate of Al-Muntafiq, the Dhafeer tribal confederation, and other hostile elements that had taken refuge in the borderlands of Basra. The Saudi raid deep into Al-Hujrah dealt a heavy blow to the Dhafeer, weakening their tribal power and sending a clear message to those aligned with the Ottomans that Diriyah was now a power capable of striking beyond its frontiers The campaign also shifted the psychological balance of the conflict For the first time, the Saudis were not only on the defensive but now projecting strength into Ottoman territory. The campaign in Al-Hujrah gave the Saudis a forward position from which they could challenge the Mamluk rulers of Iraq particularly the semi-autonomous governor of Baghdad, Suleiman Pasha the Great In the aftermath of the raid alarm spread through Ottoman ranks. A series of urgent letters were exchanged between Sultan Selim III and Suleiman Pasha urging the mobilization of a major Ottoman military campaign against Diriyah, the heart of the First Saudi State However Suleiman Pasha hesitated. He understood the immense difficulty of waging a traditional campaign in the harsh desert terrain of Najd a region alien to the tactics and logistics of the Ottoman army Moreover, the Pasha feared that launching a full-scale invasion might trigger unrest among the tribes of southern Basra, who had shown signs of discontent

The Saudi Invasion of Qatar (1793–1799)

Following the consolidation of Saudi authority in Al-Ahsa in the early 1790s, the leadership of the First Saudi State turned its attention toward Qatar, which had become a haven for enemies of Diriyah. The town of Al-Zubarah, in particular, provided

protection and refuge to several leaders of the Banu Khalid, including Zaid bin Arir and Abdulmuhsin, as well as many residents of Al-Ahsa who had fled Saudi advances. The town's growing role as a center for opposition coupled with its economic prosperity due to trade, made it a strategic target for the Saudis.
Under the pretext of spreading the Wahhabi reformist message in Qatar, Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz ordered his commander, Ibrahim ibn Afaysan, to launch a military expedition into the peninsula. The first campaign reached Qatar in 1791, clashing with local tribes and resulting in the death of around fifty Qatari defenders.
In Southern part of Doha A follow-up invasion in 1793 targeted the town of Al-Huwaylah, the seat of the Al-Musallam clan, which was captured along with the surrounding settlements of Fariha, Al-Yusufiyyah, and Al-Ruwaidha leaving Al-Zubarah as the last remaining stronghold With Saudi rule firmly established in Al-Ahsa by 1794, Ibn Afaysan sought permission from Diriyah to advance on Al-Zubarah He began his campaign by disrupting the city's access to essential resources such as water from wells located seven miles away, firewood from the outskirts, and pastureland for livestock. The Saudis imposed a land-based siege, as they lacked a naval fleet. They blocked all land access to the city, cutting off vital supplies and isolating Al-Zubarah.
Despite their initial resistance, the townspeople realized that the Saudi siege was not a temporary tactic and that Ibn Afaysan would not withdraw without victory In the meantime Saudi raiding parties continued to secure other settlements in Qatar, further weakening Al-Zubarah's support network. Eventually, the residents of Al-Zubarah made the decision to abandon the city entirely, evacuating by sea to Bahrain, where they settled in the region of Jaw and constructed a fortress to defend themselves.
The Saudis seized several boats during their campaigns along the Qatari coast and attempted to establish a naval blockade. However, the naval strength of Al-Zubarah proved too formidable, dispersing the makeshift Saudi fleet. Still, the persistence of the land siege compelled the defenders to relocate rather than engage the Saudis directly in open combat After the evacuation of Al-Zubarah, Saudi forces entered the deserted city in early 1799, finding it empty but visibly marked by its former prosperity. Ibn Afaysan is said to have felt a deep sense of sorrow upon witnessing the once-thriving town reduced to silence and abandonment Before their departure, the people of Al-Zubarah ordered the destruction of their military outposts at Al-Akwat, fearing they might be used by Saudi forces to entrench themselves further in the region. With this, Al-Zubarah fell under Saudi control, marking the culmination of nearly a decade of gradual military pressure and religious justification for intervention in Qatar.

The Kuwaiti–Saudi War (1793–1808)

The First Saudi State did not come into direct conflict with Kuwait until the final decade of the 18th century. The fall of the Banu Khalid Emirate, formerly dominant in eastern Arabia, shifted the balance of power and prompted a new Saudi frontier. Many leaders of the defeated Banu Khalid, including Zaid bin Arir (in 1793) and Abdulmuhsin Al-Sardah (in 1795), sought refuge in Kuwait, which was then under the rule of the Al-Sabah family. This asylum for Saudi adversaries put Kuwait on a collision course with Diriyah The Saudis viewed Kuwait not only as a former Khalidi possession, but also as a region of strategic and economic value thanks to its bustling maritime trade and proximity to contested territories. In 1208 AH / 1793 CE, Ibrahim ibn Afaysan, a key military commander of the Saudi state, led the first Saudi raid on Kuwait, supported by

fighters from Al-Kharj, Al-ʻĀriḍ, and Sudayr. The raid resulted in the death of thirty Kuwaitis and the seizure of livestock and weapons, though no lasting gains were made The growing Saudi threat spurred the Kuwaitis to construct a defensive wall around Kuwait City in 1212 AH / 1797 CE. The Saudis, however, continued to mount occasional raids along the frontier. A notable attack occurred in 1798, when Mana' Abu Rijlain, acting under the orders of Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad, raided the outskirts of Kuwait, capturing large herds of sheep. The Kuwaitis responded with a sizable force, but a Saudi ambush in Hafar Al Batin resulted in the death of approximately 20 Kuwaiti fighters along with the capture of more arms and supplies Despite these engagements, Kuwait never formally allied itself with Banu Khalid in any offensive against the Saudis. However, the recurring raids, coupled with Kuwait's harboring of Saudi enemies, kept tensions high. The Saudis viewed Kuwait not just as a refuge for fugitives, but as a symbol of defiance and a barrier to complete control over the Arabian coastline. In 1808, the final major confrontation occurred when Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz laid siege to Kuwait. Despite Saudi efforts, the siege did not succeed in breaching the fortified city, nor did it lead to political surrender. Nevertheless, this long period of intermittent military pressure (1793–1808) demonstrated the persistence of Saudi ambitions and their view of Kuwait as an essential part of their territorial and ideological campaign British records from the era, particularly the writings of Lorimer and Mr. Ryno, reveal that the British East India Company was monitoring Saudi movements with concern, especially as the Wahhabi campaigns edged closer to British maritime interests in the Gulf. Conflicting reports mention Saudi forces numbering from 500 to 2,000 fighters, some mounted on camels, using muskets and spears in coordinated formations. At one point British officers allegedly intervened by deploying naval artillery and sepoys (Indian troops) to defend the city from Saudi advances Although the First Saudi State never fully occupied Kuwait, its continuous raids and the psychological effect of Wahhabi expansion placed Kuwait on high alert. These raids further isolated Banu Khalid whose political influence in the region was definitively broken by the Battle of Guraymil in 1789, paving the way for uncontested Saudi expansion into the Persian Gulf's tribal emirates, including Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait

The Campaign of Thuwaini Al-Saadoun (1797)

In the year 1212 AH (1797 CE), as the First Saudi State expanded its influence across central Arabia and along the Gulf coast, it became increasingly clear to regional rivals that the rise of the Wahhabi movement was more than a passing threat. The fall of al-Ahsa to the Saudis and the growing reach of their religious mission into the fringes of Iraq alarmed the Ottoman authorities, especially in Baghdad Suleiman Pasha the Great, the semi-autonomous Mamluk governor of Baghdad, had long been cautious of directly confronting the Saudis. He feared the logistical challenges of waging war across the vast Arabian deserts and the possibility of rebellion among the tribes of southern Iraq should he falter. But mounting pressure from Istanbul, combined with local appeals from threatened Gulf factions, forced his hand. It was then that Thuwaini bin Abdullah Al-Saadoun, former Sheikh of the Muntafiq tribal confederation, presented himself as the man to lead a grand campaign against the Saudis on one condition: the restoration of his authority over the Muntafiq Seeing an opportunity, Suleiman Pasha agreed and armed Thuwaini with 50,000 silver piasters, one hundred horses, camels, and cloaks. Returning to the southern plains, Thuwaini raised a powerful army composed of the

Muntafiq, the people of Basra and Zubair, tribes of the Dhafir, and reinforcements from Kuwait and Bahrain. For three months, his forces encamped at Jahra, preparing to strike into al-Ahsa But in Diriyah, Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad had already begun his countermove. Aware of the size and coordination of the impending force, he ordered his son, Prince Saud bin Abdulaziz, to move swiftly and position himself strategically at Rawdat al-Tinah. He also dispatched reinforcements to secure critical water sources in Bani Khalid territory and instructed his commanders in al-Ahsa to prepare for defense. Thuwaini's forces, meanwhile, advanced toward the Saudi frontier. The Wahhabi commander Muhammad bin Muqay'il initially retreated from Jariyah to Umm Rabi'ah to await reinforcements. Back in Diriyah, the Imam sent another army led by Hassan bin Mishari bin Saud, the prince's cousin, to bolster the defense. Just when the stage seemed set for a major confrontation, fate intervened On the morning of June 28, 1797 (4 Muharram 1212 AH) as Thuwaini's army settled near a watering site known as al-Shibak, a servant named Tu'ays reportedly a devout Wahhabi and member of the Jabur clan of Bani Khalid entered Thuwaini's tent and stabbed him through the back with a spear. The blow was fatal. The death of the Muntafiq leader at such a critical moment sent shockwaves through the camp Chaos followed. Bani Khalid under Buraik bin Abdulmuhsin al-Sardah abandoned the coalition and defected to the Saudis. The invading army fragmented; order collapsed. Nasser, Thuwaini's brother, tried to hold the line, but many tribesmen fled, leaving behind cannons, ammunition, and livestock As night fell the Saudis struck. Hassan bin Mishari's forces launched a devastating assault, scattering what remained of Thuwaini's army, killing those who lagged behind, and capturing vast quantities of loot three thousand camels, over a hundred thousand sheep, and multiple pieces of artillery It was a resounding Saudi victory. The death of Thuwaini extinguished the last serious Iraqi attempt to curb the First Saudi State's advance. In Baghdad, panic replaced hope. The Ottomans had lost their best tribal ally in the region, and the Saudis, emboldened by the triumph, soon launched raids into Muntafiq territory. A fragile Ottoman counter-campaign led by Ali Pasha al-Kahiya was launched the next year but collapsed in failure before reaching al-Ahsa In hindsight, the campaign of 1797 proved more than just a failed military expedition it was a turning point. It shattered the confidence of the Ottoman proxies in southern Iraq and confirmed the First Saudi State's ability to not only defend its borders but project power far beyond them

The campaign of Ali Al-Kahiya (1798)

campaign that took place in the year 1213 AH/1798 AD and was led by Ali Pasha Al-Kakhiya or Al-Kahiya to invade Al-Ahsa in the year 1798 AD in preparation for the march towards Diriyah. This campaign came out in the wake of the collapse of the Thuwaini bin Abdullah Al-Saadoun campaign to stop the Wahhabi attacks against the cities. And in the valley of southern Ottoman Iraq, especially the pastures of Emirate of Muntafiq, after the assassination of Sheikh Thuwaini. In the year 1798 AD, Minister Sulayman Pasha the Great prepared a large campaign of men and weapons and supplemented it with units from the Shammar tribes led by Sheikh Faris bin Muhammad al-Jarba and Ali al-Kahiya. However, the campaign failed in its mission after a peace was established between the two parties. After the Wahhabis Spirits became so strong that they posed a real threat to the Ottoman Sultanate, the Sublime Porte asked Minister Sulayman Pasha the Great to eliminate the Wahhabi threat. The minister

assigned this task to Sheikh Thuwaini Al-Saadoun after he returned the sheikhdom of Al-Muntafiq to him in the year 1796 AD. Thuwaini took advantage of that opportunity and announced a general mobilization. The Arabs of Al-Muntafiq and the people of Az Zubayr and Basra gathered at him, and then the governor provided him with an army that he met in Al-Jahra. Thuwaini headed his campaign south towards Al-Ahsa. However, Al-Saadoun's campaign was not able to achieve its goal, because he was assassinated by one of Bani Khalid's slaves in a window near the sea on Wednesday, June 28, 1797 AD / Muharram 4, 1212 AH. The ranks of the Iraqi campaign became turbulent, and their turmoil increased after the withdrawal of Barak Al-Sardah from Bani Khalid. He joined Ibn Mishari's army, and the Iraqi army collapsed and was forced to retreat. The Al Saud forces chased it and seized much of its equipment, cannons, ammunition, and a lot of spoils The impact of the killing of Sheikh Thuwaini Al-Saadoun was significant in Baghdad and the Sublime Porte. In Baghdad, his assassination caused panic and anxiety because the state relied on his skills in repelling the Wahhabi advance towards Iraq. Nasser bin Abdullah, Thuwaini's brother, tried to reconcile the defeat of the army, as he wanted to return the ball to the Wahhabis, but Minister Sulayman Pasha the Great abandoned that idea and returned the sheikhdom of Al-Muntafiq to Hamoud Al-Thamer after he realized the enormity of what had happened. In Najd, the absence of Thuwaini was a great opportunity because he posed a threat to them, and the disintegration of his army gave a boost to morale. The Wahhabis attacked the outskirts of Al-Muntafiq in Ramadan 1212 AH/1797 AD and went to the village of Umm Al-Abbas, which is close to the Shuyoukh market, and plundered it. Hamoud Al-Thamer pursued them, but they escaped and returned to their homes. Which prompted the governor to prepare another campaign in 1798 AD, led by his daughter's husband, "Ali Pasha al-Kahiya to invade Al-Ahsa in preparation for the march towards Diriyah On Rabi' al-Akhir 22, 1213 AH/October 2, 1798 AD, Sulayman Pasha the Great prepared a third major campaign and handed over its leadership to his deputy, Ali Pasha. The campaign consisted of Eighteen thousand with four thousand to five thousand Camels supported by an artillery column that was not very efficient, then an untrained force was added to it, an untrained force equivalent to twice the trained force from the Aqeel and Ubaid tribes and from the Shammar tribe led by Fares al-Jarba, and al-Muntafiq, led by Hamoud bin Thamer al-Saadoun. They were joined by the tribes of Al-Baij, Al-Zaqarit, Al-Qash'am, the people of Al-Zubayr, their prince Ibrahim Al-Thaqib, and groups from Al-Dhafeer. Al-Kahiya Muhammad Bey, the leader of the Ubaid tribe, was accompanied by an advisor on desert affairs, and those armies arrived in Basra on January 2, 1799, AD, then Al-Zubair, Al-Rawdhatain, and Al-Jahra, and the expedition rented boats from the Sheikh of Kuwait, Abdullah Al-Sabah, to transport heavy equipment to Al-Uqair. Ten thousand camels carried water and other necessities, but their number was rapidly decreasing. The hardships of walking required many stops for many days. Given Ali Pasha's ignorance of military affairs and his poor treatment of the tribal leaders on whom he had to depend, many predicted the campaign's failure and collapse even before it took action. The target of the campaign was Diriyah, the Wahhabi capital, and from Basra the Pasha used the long, safer route to Al-Ahsa. His forces were able to occupy all the Wahhabi positions with the exception of the two garrison of Qasr Sahoud in Mubarraz and Al-Hofuf, and it was said that Qatif Castle held out for two months from 7 Ramadan - 7 Dhul-Qi'dah 1213 AH / 11 February – 11 April 1799 AD. The garrison of the fort of Mubarraz was headed by Suleiman bin Muhammad bin Majid, the commander of Qatif Castle was Ibrahim bin Ufaisan, during which Ali Pasha was ordered to besiege Al-Mirz Fort, but he failed to seize it despite the cracks he caused in

the walls of the fort, because the artillery that the Pasha brought was suitable for striking defense centers built of Al-Rahas clay every day spent in the army requires double hardship and hardship. Then there was the loss of camels that warned the army of the possibility of losing them all. The campaign's supplies and strength began to run out before it achieved its goal. Because of boredom and thirst, the Ottoman army began to weaken, and it failed to achieve its basic mission, which was to prevent Al Saud's attacks on southern Iraq. The camels became emaciated and a large number of them died, so the commander was forced to destroy much of his weapons or bury them in the dirt because he was unable to transport them. Supplies and ammunition decreased, so the soldiers asked their superiors to return, especially after news came that Ibn Saud had blocked the road to them from the north of Hufuf, and was throwing salt on the wells there to prevent them from using them. He yielded to the advice of his assistants, the most famous of whom was Muhammad Bey, who suspected that he was corresponding with the Saudis. He lifted the siege on them and tried to return to Basra, but because of the strong winds, the campaign retreated to the ground During his return, Wahhabi forces advanced from Diriyah to Al-Ahsa, led by Prince Saud bin Abdulaziz As soon as he learned of the withdrawal of Ali Pasha's forces, he decided to pursue them. He preceded it and landed on the water of Thaj after he took control of northern Al-Ahsa with his forces, thus cutting off the Pasha's return to Basra. Ali Pasha had camped in a place called “Al-Shabak”, and then headed towards Thaj. Skirmishes took place between the two sides, which were to no avail, and neither side was victorious. Had it not been for the Ottoman artillery and the tribes with the Pasha (Al-Muntafiq, Shammar, Al-Ubaid, Qash’am, and others), Prince Saud would have defeated the campaign, so messengers began between them to begin the Peace. Ali Pasha's demands during the negotiations that took place in the period from Dhul-Hijjah 1213 AH/May 1799 were evacuating Al-Ahsa, treating the Iraqi pilgrims with kindness, returning the cannons seized by the Wahhabis, and then paying a fine. These demands were unrealistic, especially since they came in a time of failure and decline of the campaign. Therefore, Saud, the master of desert diplomacy and secretly connected to the Iraqi army did not respond to the demands as he referred them to his father He only responded to the demand to evacuate Al-Ahsa saying that it was a village outside the rule of the Turks and not worth the effort. In the end, Ali Pasha agreed - through some senior tribal leaders to conclude a six-year non-aggression pact with the Wahhabis he was able to take his army and return eight months after the start of the campaign with some face. He also took a representative of the House of Saud with him to Baghdad to receive from the governor of Baghdad ratification of the concluded agreement. The only success in that campaign was a raid by Sheikh Hamoud bin Thamer Al-Saadoun against the Subay tribes in Najd, from which he captured many sheep and camels, which helped the large army. However, Al-Saadoun rejected that peace treaty, which he found closer to a truce than to a treaty of peace and peace As for Prince Saud bin Abdul Aziz, after the departure of the Ottoman army, he quickly entered Al-Ahsa and ordered the beheadings of everyone who cooperated with the Ottoman forces and confiscated their money. He then followed this up by attacking Qatif adjacent to Al-Ahsa, and captured it after a bloody raid

The Saudi Conquest of Ras Al Khaimah (1799)

By the closing years of the 18th century, the First Saudi State had established itself as a dominant power in central and eastern Arabia. With al-Ahsa under firm control and the Wahhabi religious mission gaining ground, the Saudi leadership turned its eyes further east, toward the shores of the Persian Gulf where the strategically important coastal towns of the Trucial Coast (modern-day UAE) stood, ruled by powerful seafaring tribes such as the Qawasim Ras Al Khaimah the stronghold of the Qawasim, had long been a center of maritime power and trade, with a network that extended from the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea. But for the Saudis, the town represented more than just a political prize it symbolized a religious frontier. The region, rich with Sufi shrines and domed graves, stood in contradiction to the strict monotheistic creed of the Wahhabi movement. And when signs emerged that the Qawasim were willing to receive Wahhabi preachers and align politically with Diriyah, the opportunity presented itself. In 1799, under the leadership of Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad and with the support of Prince Saud bin Abdulaziz, a Saudi expedition was launched to bring Ras Al Khaimah formally under the authority of the First Saudi State. The campaign was swift and purposeful. Saudi forces approached the city by land, blockading its routes and cutting off supplies. Ras Al Khaimah, though protected by walls and tribal defenders, found itself besieged by an unexpected force one driven not just by conquest, but by creed For weeks, the siege persisted, with the Qawasim mounting a valiant resistance. Yet under increasing pressure, and likely recognizing the growing influence of the Saudis in the region, the Qawasim elders entered into negotiations. Eventually, they agreed to end hostilities and pledged loyalty to the Saudi state. The siege was lifted but the city had changed Upon entering Ras Al Khaimah, the Saudi forces began implementing Wahhabi reforms. Shrines and domed graves that were common across the region were deemed innovations contrary to Islamic monotheism. They were leveled. The teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab were introduced, and Ras Al Khaimah became not only a political ally but a religious extension of the Saudi mission This victory held deep significance. The allegiance of the Qawasim known for their naval power and influence strengthened the First Saudi State's position along the Gulf coast. It marked a turning point in the spread of Wahhabism into the heart of the Trucial States and laid the foundation for future confrontations with European powers, especially the British, who viewed Saudi expansion into the maritime Gulf as a threat to their interests in India The conquest of Ras Al Khaimah, therefore, was more than a military success it was a symbolic assertion of the First Saudi State’s religious and political reach from the heart of Najd to the shores of the Gulf.

The Saudi Invasion of Bahrain (1801–1810)

By the dawn of the 19th century, the First Saudi State had become a formidable force in eastern Arabia. With al-Ahsa firmly under its control and Wahhabi authority expanding into Qatar and the interior of the Gulf, the Saudis now turned their attention to the strategically positioned island of Bahrain a wealthy and politically contested prize Bahrain had long been ruled by the Al Khalifa family, who had originally based themselves in the Qatari town of Zubarah. After the Saudi commander Ibrahim ibn ‘Afaysan entered Zubarah and brought it under Wahhabi control, the Al Khalifa fled to Bahrain and settled in the village of Jaw around 1797. However, their hold on the island proved tenuous. In 1800, Sultan bin Ahmad Al Busaidi of Muscat seized Bahrain and installed his brother Sa’id as governor, forcing the Al Khalifa once again into exile

Seeking to reclaim their lost dominion, the Al Khalifa turned to a rising regional power the First Saudi State. They appealed to Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz for assistance in liberating Bahrain from Omani control Eager to extend Saudi authority across the Gulf, Imam Saud dispatched a military force under the command of Ibrahim ibn Afaysan In a swift campaign in 1801, the Saudi forces crossed to Bahrain, expelled the Muscat garrison, and declared the island part of the Saudi realm. Yet, rather than restoring Bahrain to the Al Khalifa, Ibn'Afaysan established direct Saudi rule over the island. He set up his seat in the Dīwān Fortress and appointed Fadhl bin Sulayman ibn 'Afaysan as the commander of the Saudi garrison. This move was a clear assertion of Saudi political and religious authority in the Gulf a demonstration that Wahhabi doctrine and Diriyah's reach extended even across the waters The Al Khalifa, however did not accept this betrayal quietly. Stripped of power and with several of their leaders including Sheikh Salman bin Ahmad detained in Diriyah, the family plotted their return. They reached out to regional allies the Al Busaidis of Muscat sympathetic clans of the Utub confederation and even to Qajar Iran With coordinated support the Persia mounted a counteroffensive attacking the Saudi garrison in Bahrain In a dramatic reversal, they drove out Ibn Afaysan and captured his cousin the garrison commander Fadhl ibn Sulayman, along with sixteen soldiers holding them hostage in exchange for the release of their family members held in Diriyah but Saud had defeated Persian forces in the battle of Muzayib in 1810 and forced The Al Khalifa to release The Saudi garrison and pledge allegiance to Saud for the release of Al khalifa in Diriyah but 1811 another Campaign Was Launched Against Bahrain this time enlisting the notorious Arabian Gulf pirate, Rahmah ibn Jabir al-Jalahimah and the Saudi Commander ibn Ufaysan But the campaign ended in disaster. In 1811, the Saudi forces suffered a decisive defeat in the Battle of Khakeekera just off the coast. Realizing the strategic overreach who soon returned to Bahrain and re-established their authority

Though the Saudis never again attempted a serious invasion of Bahrain the brief of allegiance to Saud for protection and Furthermore Bahrain's economic and strategic importance attracted outside attention, including from Persia Muscat and even the British. a Omani-Persian expedition force in 1816 in June the the Persian and Omani forces landed in but were Attacked Attacked by Wahhabi Backed Bahrain defeating said bin Sultan Was Quickly withdraw From The island back to muscat

The Wahhabi Conquest of the Hijaz (1803–1806)

The early relationship between the First Saudi State and the Sharifs of Mecca was marked by tension and mistrust. Although the rulers of Diriyah initially sought peaceful dialogue with the Hejaz, particularly through scholarly delegations aimed at clarifying their reformist message, the Sharifs viewed the Wahhabi movement as a direct threat to their religious authority and local rule. The response from Mecca was swift and hostile. In the mid-18th century, when a delegation of thirty Najdi scholars arrived in Mecca to discuss their beliefs, they were imprisoned. The Qadi of Mecca subsequently issued a fatwa denouncing the Wahhabis as heretics As the Wahhabi movement spread across central Arabia and gradually consumed the Eastern Province, conflict with the Hejaz became inevitable. The situation escalated during the rule of Sharif Ghalib bin Musa'id, who banned Najdi pilgrims from performing the Hajj and treated the followers of the Wahhabi creed as apostates. Skirmishes and raids soon evolved into a full-scale military confrontation In 1790, Sharif Ghalib launched a large military expedition into central

Arabia. Despite his numerical advantage and logistical preparation, his campaign ended in a series of humiliating defeats in places such as Al-Bassam, Al-Shu'ara, and Al-Burood. The Saudi forces, under the leadership of Saud bin Abdulaziz, responded with counterattacks, defeating Ghalib's tribal allies such as the Mutayr and Shammar, and expanding their control deep into the Najd-Hijaz frontier Repeated attempts by Ghalib to seek help from the Ottoman Empire proved futile. Even when he pleaded his case to Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar and the Sultan, no decisive action was taken. By the mid-1790s, Wahhabi influence was already taking root in areas like Turaif, Bishah, and Tihama. As more tribes and local leaders, including the powerful Othman al-Mudayfi, switched allegiance to the Saudis, the Sharif's grip on the Hejaz weakened considerably. In 1802, the Saudi leader Saud bin Abdulaziz received Othman al-Mudayfi in Diriyah and formally appointed him as his ally in the Hejaz. Mudayfi began organizing local tribes against the Sharif's rule and incited rebellion in the countryside. With reinforcements from Najd, including a contingent led by the Amir of Bisha, Mudayfi laid siege to the city of Ta'if. After intense fighting, the Sharif's forces collapsed, and Ta'if fell into Wahhabi hands. The aftermath saw atrocities, including looting and the execution of those who resisted. The event sent shockwaves across the Hejaz With Ta'if captured, Saud turned his attention to the holy city of Mecca. Sharif Ghalib, recognizing his inability to withstand the advancing Saudi army, fled to Jeddah and left the city in the care of his brother, Sharif Abd al-Mu'in. In a bid to save the city from bloodshed, Abd al-Mu'in surrendered Mecca on the condition that he remain in office under the new regime.
On 8 Muharram 1218 AH (1803 CE), Prince Saud entered Mecca as a pilgrim. He granted amnesty to the citizens, distributed charity, and began a program of religious reform. Tombs and shrines were leveled, and all symbols of what the Wahhabis viewed as idolatry were destroyed. Saud then wrote to Sultan Selim III, informing him of the conquest and requesting that the annual pilgrimage caravans from Damascus and Cairo be discontinued unless they ceased certain practices deemed heretical Despite this show of force, the Wahhabis failed to take Jeddah, which remained well-defended and out of reach due to the Saudis' lack of a navy. After a brief siege, Saud withdrew and returned to Diriyah Meanwhile, the city of Medina remained under siege for two years by the tribes of Harb and the people of Quba who had embraced the Wahhabi movement. In 1805, the people of Medina, facing starvation and isolation, pledged allegiance to the Saudi state. The Prophet's Mosque was placed under Wahhabi administration, and Ottoman officials were expelled In the final act of this conquest, Saud returned to Mecca in 1806. Sharif Ghalib, now politically isolated and militarily exhausted, pledged allegiance to the Saudi state. Saud entered the city with great ceremony, expelled all Ottoman soldiers, and issued orders for the Friday sermons to be conducted in his name, not that of the Ottoman Sultan. He then replaced the Kiswah (cover of the Kaaba) with one made in Diriyah, marking the symbolic culmination of Wahhabi dominance over the holy cities.
Though the conquest of the Hijaz marked a significant high point for the First Saudi State, it also drew the attention and wrath of the Ottoman Empire. The occupation of the two holiest cities by a movement viewed as rebellious and heretical eventually provoked the Ottomans into commissioning Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt to recover the Hijaz a conflict that would soon unfold into the longest and bloodiest campaign of the Wahhabi wars

Wahhabi raids in Persian Gulf (1805)

As the First Saudi State expanded across the Arabian Peninsula, the Wahhabi leadership turned its attention eastward, toward the waters of the Persian Gulf. Control over the Gulf was not merely a question of commerce or strategic ports it was seen as a key ideological front in the struggle to cleanse the Islamic world of practices considered corrupt or heretical. With the Eastern Province (al-Ahsa) firmly under Wahhabi rule by the mid-1790s, and with growing influence over the tribal confederations of the interior, the leadership in Diriyah found a valuable ally along the southern Gulf coast: the powerful maritime tribal confederation of the Al Qasimi By the early 1800s, the Qasimi dynasty, centered in Ras al-Khaimah and Sharjah, had emerged as the dominant naval power in the southern Gulf. Their impressive fleet and longstanding hostility toward European interference made them ideal partners for the Saudis. As early as 1800, Emir Saud bin Abdulaziz and his predecessors had encouraged the Qasimis to accept Wahhabi doctrine, and by 1805 the alliance had matured into a formal political and military collaboration. Under Wahhabi spiritual and financial patronage, the Qasimi fleet launched a bold campaign of organized naval raids targeting merchant vessels in the Persian Gulf, especially those associated with British India, Muscat, and Iran. From their base in Ras al-Khaimah, the Qasimi-Wahhabi flotilla began striking trade routes with increasing intensity. According to British intelligence, the Qasimi vice-regent Husain bin Ali compelled his naval commanders to attack all foreign shipping, regardless of nationality, in the name of jihad and religious purification A portion of the loot typically one-fifth was set aside as khums, a religious tax sent directly to the treasury of Diriyah, while the remainder was divided among the tribal warriors. These raids were not mere piracy, as some British sources suggested, but were viewed by Wahhabi-aligned forces as legitimate campaigns against what they considered corrupt and infidel trade networks that enabled heretical rulers or non-Muslim powers to dominate Muslim seas.The British viewed this escalation with alarm. In his Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, the chronicler J.G. Lorimer recorded a sharp rise in attacks from 1805 onward. While some contemporary British administrators, like Arnold Wilson, argued that the Qasimis were coerced by Wahhabi threats and acted under duress, Lorimer considered this view too sympathetic. In his assessment, the Qasimi leaders acted willingly, driven by ideological zeal and a desire to control Gulf trade routes.In 1805, emboldened by victories along the Gulf and embittered by Muscat's alliance with Britain and its control over strategic islands, the Wahhabi-Qasimi coalition launched one of their boldest campaigns the capture of several Iranian islands, including the strategically critical island of Qeshm. Located off the Strait of Hormuz, Qeshm was vital for controlling the entrance to the Gulf. Reports indicate that Wahhabi-backed forces, likely operating with Qasimi naval support, raided and occupied several outposts on the island, driving out Omani and Iranian forces stationed there. The island's occupation sent a strong message to both the Sultan of Muscat and Qajar Persia the Wahhabis would not tolerate foreign domination of what they regarded as Islamic waters. The campaign also marked the furthest eastern extension of Wahhabi power Yet the reach of Wahhabi influence across the Gulf was not destined to last. By 1809, the British, increasingly concerned by the threat to Indian Ocean trade, began planning a naval expedition against Ras al-Khaimah. The Wahhabi grip over Qeshm and other islands began to loosen as regional alliances shifted and a British and Omani and ottoman Campaign in hijaz Severely weakened the Wahhabis

The Saudi Invasion of Oman (1806–1809)

By the early 19th century, the Wahhabi state, under the leadership of the Emirate of Diriyah, had already transformed the balance of power in central Arabia. With their religious zeal and military prowess, their ambitions turned toward the southeast to Oman. This new frontier offered not only geopolitical influence over the Indian Ocean but also the chance to shatter the alliances between Oman and Persia that threatened Wahhabi dominance along the Gulf coast In 1806 the political landscape of Oman descended into turmoil A bitter civil war emerged between two competing factions within the Omani elite. On one side stood Qais bin Ahmad the young aspirant to the Omani throne, supported by Wahhabi agents and elements within the interior tribes. On the other, his cousin Said bin Sultan attempted to secure power with Persian and British backing At the height of this internal struggle, Fath-Ali Shah Qajar, Shah of Iran, attempted to launch a campaign against the Wahhabis to protect Iranian interests in the Persian Gulf. However, despite appeals from Muscat and coordination with loyalist forces in Rustaq, the campaign was suppressed. The Qajar efforts failed to remove the Wahhabi threat or alter the course of the Omani civil conflict As the Shah's attempt faltered, Qais bin Ahmad seized the opportunity With Wahhabi assistance he emerged victorious, deposing said and taking control of Muscat by 1807. Yet, his rule remained fragile and Got assassinated by Said bin Sultan and the interior of Oman lay vulnerable to Wahhabi incursions In 1806, the Wahhabis, under the command of Mutlaq bin Muhammad Al-Mutairi, launched a full-scale invasion of northern Oman. Their first significant victory came at Al-Buraimi, where the local Omani forces suffered a disastrous defeat. The loss of this strategic oasis shattered the defensive frontier and opened the interior for Saudi expansion. Mutlaq bin Al-Mutairi was more than just a general he was the appointed governor of Oman by the Emirate of Diriyah, entrusted with imposing both military rule and religious reform. He launched a series of campaigns deep into Omani territory, targeting towns and forts that had long resisted Wahhabi authority In rapid succession, Saudi forces swept through Suhar, one of the Gulf's most important ports. They captured the coastal city and removed local resistance, consolidating control over Oman's maritime links. From there, they besieged the formidable Nakhal Fort, a mountain bastion long considered impregnable. Despite the strong walls and determined defenders, the Wahhabi assault prevailed, further cementing their power At Ibri, another battle broke out, where Mutlaq's forces overwhelmed tribal defenders and extended Saudi control deeper into the Jabal Akhdar region. By 1808, the Wahhabis stood at the doorstep of Oman's heartland In 1811, Mutlaq bin Al-Mutairi led the Saudi army to the walls of Muscat initiating a siege that marked the zenith of Wahhabi expansion in Oman. The defenders, loyal to Said bin Sultan and the Persian commander Saadi khan and some Omani Commander's the Wahhabis Manage to pillage the city and Sacked it Killing at least 4,000 people of Muscat Saadi khan fled back to Persia and the Omani elites and Also fled from the city In the final act of the Wahhabi-Omani war, the two armies clashed at Musannah. This battle would determine whether Oman would fall under Wahhabi rule or preserve its sovereignty. Mutlaq bin Al-Mutairi once again led the Saudi forces, while Said bin Sultan marshaled what remained of his fractured army. The battle ended indecisively, though the scale of the confrontation was immense. It is reported that Said bin Sultan, recognizing the gravity of the situation, offered 40,000 silver coins to secure the loyalty or neutrality of tribal leaders, including an effort to placate Mutlaq himself. Though not

a clear Wahhabi victory, the Saudis retained much of their territorial gains in the north, while the Omanis held onto Muscat and the southern territories. The equilibrium was fragile.

The Saudi Siege of Kuwait (1808)

The Standoff in the Northern Gulf In the summer of 1808 (1223 AH), the Emirate of Diriyah turned its attention once again to the northern Gulf. As part of his broader plan to raid southern Iraq, Emir Saud bin Abdulaziz, the ruler of the First Saudi State, demanded that Kuwait contribute financially to his campaign. The Saudis, who had long harbored resentment toward the small but defiant sheikhdom, sought to impose their authority on this critical northern Gulf outpost However, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah, ruler of Kuwait, firmly rejected the Saudi demand. This defiance enraged Emir Saud, who mobilized a force of 4,000 fighters, marching north with the intent to coerce Kuwait into compliance. The Saudi army encamped first at Al-Jahra, near Kuwait's outskirts, as a demonstration of force. Despite the military threat, Sheikh Abdullah maintained his diplomatic composure. He extended traditional Arab hospitality by sending sacks of rice, coffee, and sugar to the Saudi camp. Yet Emir Saud remained unmoved. His memory still lingered on Kuwait's bold response in 1797, when the Kuwaitis retaliated after Diriyah's second failed expedition against the city. No display of politeness could erase that offense Ignoring the advice of his closest advisors who warned against attacking a fortified seaport defended by a capable navy Saud pressed on. From Jahra, he moved his army to Al-Shamiya, a vital water source and the only firewood collection point for Kuwait at the time. There, he laid siege to the city, hoping to force its surrender through attrition But Kuwait, despite its modest size, had long developed robust maritime defenses. It relied on the sea for its survival. When the siege tightened and resources dwindled, Kuwaiti ships began importing water from Failaka Island and firewood from Basra. The sea was their lifeline and one that Diriyah's land army could not sever.

To show the Saudis that Kuwait would not be broken, Sheikh Abdullah staged a calculated gesture: he ordered large caravans of livestock to carry water and firewood directly to the Saudi lines. This demonstration made it clear that the city would not succumb.

Realizing his siege was ineffective, Emir Saud attempted a subtler tactic. He sent a secret message to a prominent Kuwaiti merchant, Abdulrahman bin Zabin, requesting supplies and weapons. But bin Zabin, loyal to his homeland, immediately delivered the letter unopened to Sheikh Abdullah This action was motivated by two reasons: First, he feared being accused of treason; second, he wished to expose Emir Saud's plot. Bin Zabin had estates and palm groves in Qatif, and suspected the Emir was seeking a pretext to confiscate them Sheikh Abdullah gave bin Zabin permission to comply with the Saudi request but only to show that Kuwait was aware of and in control of the situation. When Emir Saud learned that the supplies were sent under the sheikh's orders, he realized his plan had failed. The Kuwaiti leadership had seen through the ruse With the siege going nowhere, Saud withdrew from Al-Shamiya and encamped at Fintas, further along the coast. He left behind spies in Kuwait to monitor the city's reaction. Reports soon reached him that Kuwaitis were outraged not because bin Zabin had dealt with the Saudis, but because Sheikh Abdullah hadn't punished him. Among the most incensed was his son, Jaber Al-Sabah, who pressed for a direct confrontation with the Wahhabi

army Upon hearing of this growing defiance and the Kuwaiti people's readiness for war, Emir Saud considered launching an assault. But one of his trusted advisors, Hujaylan, urged him to avoid a fruitless battle against a well-defended seaport. At last, Emir Saud heeded the advice, broke camp, and withdrew his forces The stand Kuwait took in 1808 echoed throughout the Gulf. Suleiman Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Baghdad, sent gifts to Sheikh Abdullah in gratitude for his strong resistance to the Wahhabi advance. Meanwhile, the Saudis sought to punish Kuwait by attempting to organize a naval coalition against it.Emir Saud lobbied Sultan bin Saqr Al-Qasimi, ruler of the Qawasim, and Said bin Sultan of Muscat, to deploy their fleets against Kuwait. He even tried to coerce the Al-Utub tribes of Bahrain and Zubarah into participating. But his plan failed. Both rulers and the Gulf's maritime powers refused to partake in a campaign against Kuwait. The reason for their refusal remains unclear, though some historians attribute it to longstanding trade ties and mutual distrust of Wahhabi aggression.
The siege of Kuwait, though brief, symbolized the resilience of the northern Gulf emirate. It exposed the limits of Saudi land power in maritime theaters and highlighted the strategic value of seaborne trade and diplomacy in the Gulf's balance of power

The Wahhabi Conflict with the Qajars (1808-1811)

The seeds of hostility between the Wahhabi Emirate of Diriyah and the Qajar dynasty of Persia were sown long before the first sabers clashed The most searing moment came in 1802 (1216 AH) when Wahhabi forces under the command of Saud bin Abdulaziz launched a devastating assault on Karbala one of Shi'a Islam's holiest cities. The Saudi army stormed the shrine of Imam Husayn looting its treasures and slaughtering many of its inhabitants. The sack of Karbala sent shockwaves throughout the Shi'a world and provoked widespread outrage across Persia In Tehran Fath-Ali Shah Qajar vowed revenge for the desecration But the Wahhabis did not stop at Karbala. They pressed further into Iraq, conducting swift raids on the outskirts of Najaf striking fear into another center of Shi'a scholarship and devotion in 1806 the Wahhabi Manage to conquer the city and pillaged it further angered the Qajars By 1805 the Wahhabis began expanding their reach eastward across the Persian Gulf. Backed by the formidable naval forces of their allies the Al Qasimi tribe Wahhabi partisans seized the Persian island of Qeshm situated off the southern coast of Persia. This bold move marked a dramatic escalation No longer were the Wahhabi incursions confined to the desert frontiers of Arabia they had now breached Persian maritime space striking at its coastline and undermining Qajar control The chance came When the Wahhabis came to Oman After Mutlaq bin Mohammed Al-Mutairi imposed Wahhabi control over much of Oman, the Italian physician Dr. Morisi advised Said bin Sultan of Oman to seek help from the Qajar Empire. Said responded positively, as tensions had already escalated between the Wahhabis and the Qajars following the Wahhabi sack of Karbala in 1802, the capture of Qajar islands of the Persian coast, and multiple Wahhabi raids on Persian shipping, particularly in 1805.
Said bin Sultan sent his brother Salem bin Sultan as a delegate to Shiraz where he met Fath-Ali Shah ruler of the Qajar Empire. After extended negotiations the Shah agreed to assist in halting Wahhabi expansion He appointed Saadi Khan as the military commander responsible for operations in the Persian Gulf and Oman. Saadi Khan assembled a force of approximately 3,000 troops, which landed in Barka, Oman. It was agreed that Salem bin Sultan would command the campaign jointly with the Persians.

Recognizing the danger of this Qajar-Omani alliance, Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud dispatched Mutlaq bin Mohammed Al-Mutairi to confront the threat. As the first clash unfolded, Saadi khan successfully recaptured the Nakhal forts in early 1808. Encouraged, he launched a naval campaign led by his son against Qatar, which resulted in the destruction of Zubarah and the capture of several tribal leaders allied with the Saudis.

Mutlaq responded by gathering a tribal force with support from Sheikh Mohammed bin Nasser Al-Jabri. Tribal allies included the Na'im, Bani Qitab, Al-Dhawahir, and Al-Duru with new reinforcements from the Bani Bu Ali Omani tribes opposing Qajar interference Meanwhile, Persian-Omani forces under Saadi Khan assembled at Izki, fortifying its castle and installing cannons. Sheikh Issa bin Saleh Al-Harthi joined the allied force A fierce battle erupted near Izki, resulting in a Wahhabi victory. Saadi Khan got wounded and fled to Barka and the Wahhabis besieged the castle in izki the Wahhabis captured 120 troops, along with artillery and supplies Mutlaq's forces continued their campaign, seizing Samail and laying siege to its fort from the Persians which eventually fell. Upon hearing of two Persian ships stationed in Muttrah, Mutlaq launched a successful assault, destroying the the Persian ships He then led a siege on Muscat in 1810. In the same period, Wahhabi forces retaliated in Bandar Abbas in 1809 and killing the governor Aziz khan occupying the city and besieging Minab a strategic town. April 1809 a fleet sailed from Bushire carrying 4,000 men with the purpose of joining up with a second force from Muscat for a joint attack upon Khaur Hassan, to be followed, perhaps, if successful, by another upon the Qawasim of Ras al-Khaima. But the project lacked sufficient ships and planning the Persian fleet soon fell in with a superior force of 22 Qasimi dows lost six large vessels and and Capture of the Persian commander Bahram khan Zandani and returned defeated to Bushire this is Iran only seriously attempted to combat the Wahhabis overseas nearby In response Ali Mirza sends Saadi Khan to Oman and launched new naval attacks on Bahrain and Muscat. They were defeated by Wahhabis in Muzayrib in 1810 In Muscat Saadi Khan again achieved success temporarily driving out Wahhabi forces He even launched a limited raid on Al Ain, Attacking the Wahhabis launched a second siege of Muscat this time successfully plundering the city and forcing Persian withdrawal from Oman To discourage further Persian involvement Saud bin Abdulaziz sent Ibrahim Abdul Karim to Shiraz with an Delegation to the Qajar court The Persian government already embroiled in war with Russia In fact did not process the means requisite for attacking the Wahhabis so the Persian government accepted the request and ceased military support to Said bin Sultan This diplomatic outcome marked a political victory for the Saudis By the end of the conflict Wahhabi forces had regained control of Muscat Oman's interior, and parts of the Persian Gulf, including Bandar Abbas By the end of 1811. Even while the Qajar Empire fought militarily against the Wahhabis in the Persian Gulf, the ideological spread of Wahhabi Dawah (preaching) was not fully contained. In regions of southern Iran such as Laristan, Bushehr and Shib Kuh several tribal communities and coastal populations were receptive to Wahhabi religious teachings. These areas were ethnically Arab or Sunni-majority, and some openly sympathized with the Wahhabis refusing obedience to the Qajar-appointed governors. Historical sources mention communities in Qeshm, Bandar Ra's al-Khaimah, and even Shib Kuh adopting Wahhabi beliefs and resisting Persian Shi'a authority. This ideological presence led to internal unrest, and in some cases, Wahhabi-inspired rebellions Qajar commanders such as Mohammad Zaki Khan-e Nuri were dispatched to suppress these groups indicating that the Wahhabi movement was not just a foreign enemy, but a religious insurgency within Qajar lands in 1815 Force of Qawasim-

Wahhabi under Shaikh Mohammed bin Qadib five vessels carrying 800 man Sant by Sultan bin Sharja by the approval abdallah bin saud Arrived at Bushire in last week of August and plundered the city, especially the district of Bihbihani quarter of the City Every house was destroyed several women was carried off during the attack They pushed The Local Persian forces back to Borazjan A few years later, they attacked the port city of Asalo in 1817

Wahhabi Raids on Ottoman Iraq (1798–1811)

The seeds of confrontation between the Mamluks of Ottoman Iraq and the First Saudi State were sown when southern Iraq became a haven for those opposed to the Saudi-Wahhabi reformist movement. Tensions escalated following the 1786 (1201 AH) campaign of Thuwaini bin Abdullah Al-Saadoun, the Emir of Al-Muntafiq. With a vast coalition composed of the tribes of Al-Muntafiq, Al-Majara, Al-Zubayr, Shammar, Ghālib, and Tayy, Thuwaini launched a ferocious assault on the town of Tanuma. The town fell by force, and its inhabitants were massacred in what became known as the Tanuma Massacre. Following this, Thuwaini laid siege to Buraidah but was forced to withdraw when internal unrest broke out in his own territories.

This brutal campaign intensified hostilities and paved the way for direct confrontation between the Saudis and the Mamluks of Iraq. In response, Imam Abdulaziz bin Muhammad sent a letter to Sulayman Pasha the Great, the Ottoman governor of Baghdad, along with a copy of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab's treatise Kitab al-Tawhid. He urged him to gather the scholars of Baghdad to review the teachings and embrace its call. The request was dismissed with scorn, and Iraq was thereafter considered dar al-harb (abode of war) by the Saudi state.

Emboldened, Imam Abdulaziz launched retaliatory campaigns. In 1788 (1203 AH), his son, Saud bin Abdulaziz, led a reconnaissance force that struck deep into Iraqi territory at the site of Al-Rawdhatayn, between Al-Mutlaʿ and Safwan, marking the first Saudi incursion into Ottoman Iraq. The Emirate of Al-Muntafiq continued to harbor exiles from the Saudi sphere, including Abdulmuhsin bin Sardah and later his son Barak bin Abdulmuhsin.

By 1794 (1209 AH), Imam Saud led another campaign targeting the Dhafir tribe in Al-Hijra district near the Iraqi border. The Saudi forces began shifting the battlefield to southern Iraq, asserting dominance after securing Al-Ahsa. This shift in power posed a growing challenge to the Mamluks of Iraq, prompting the Ottoman Porte to instruct Sulayman Pasha to prepare a decisive campaign against Diriyah, the Saudi capital. Understanding the logistical and strategic challenges of desert warfare, Sulayman Pasha opted to use Arab tribal forces against the Saudis. He released Thuwaini bin Abdullah from prison and restored him as Emir of Al-Muntafiq, replacing Hamud bin Thamir. A new campaign was assembled, combining forces from Al-Muntafiq, Al-Zubayr, Basra, and disgruntled factions of Bani Khalid, including Barak bin Abdulmuhsin and Muhammad bin Urair.

Thuwaini aimed first at Al-Ahsa, leveraging local allies and maritime transport to compensate for the harsh terrain. Despite a promising start, the campaign collapsed when Thuwaini was assassinated by a slave of Bani Khalid before engaging Saudi forces. The allied forces disbanded in disarray, pursued and routed by the Saudi army as far as Kuwait. Much of the coalition's equipment and supplies were captured, and Barak bin Abdulmuhsin defected to the Saudis. In a swift counterstrike, Saud bin Abdulaziz

launched a campaign into southern Iraq, targeting Suq al-Shuyukh, Al-Samawah, and the village of Umm al-Abbas. His raids included attacks on Shammar and Dhafir tribes, resulting in the death of Mutlaq Al-Jarba, a prominent Shammar leader. In October 1798 (22 Rabi' al-Akhir 1213 AH), Sulayman Pasha organized a new campaign under his deputy, Ali Pasha Al-Kihya. Composed of 4,000–5,000 Janissaries and tribal auxiliaries—such as Shammar under Faris Al-Jarba, Al-Muntafiq under Hamud Al-Saadoun, and contingents from Al-Zubayr, Dhafir, and other clans—the army moved from Basra toward Al-Ahsa. They rented boats from Sheikh Abdullah Al-Sabah of Kuwait to transport heavy equipment to Uqayr, while 10,000 camels carried provisions across the desert.

However, Ali Pasha's poor leadership, lack of desert warfare experience, and strained relations with tribal leaders doomed the campaign. After besieging the Saudi fortresses in Al-Hofuf and Al-Mubarraz defended respectively by Ibrahim bin Suleiman bin Afaisan and Suleiman bin Muhammad bin Majid the expedition faced rising casualties, exhaustion, and dwindling supplies. Demoralized, the army withdrew.

Saud bin Abdulaziz, having arrived in Al-Ahsa with reinforcements, pursued the retreating force to the area of Thāj. Though skirmishes occurred near the location of "Al-Shabbak," no decisive battle ensued. Ali Pasha, recognizing the failure, proposed unrealistic peace terms, including Saudi withdrawal from Al-Ahsa and return of all spoils. Saud deferred to his father but used the delay to consolidate Saudi gains.

Ali Pasha's campaign ended in complete failure. His force's fragmentation, logistical challenges, and unfamiliarity with the desert rendered them ineffective against Saudi resilience. The Saudis had effectively established military superiority over the Mamluks of Iraq, and their campaign's failure proved Baghdad's inability to decisively counter the Saudi state. Consequently, the Ottoman authorities began to consider entrusting the campaign to eliminate Diriyah to other provinces, particularly Egypt The fragile truce brokered between Imam Saud Al-Kabir and the Ottoman governor of Baghdad Ali Pasha in the final years of the 18th century proved to be short-lived. In 1799 (1214 AH) tensions flared once more when the Khaza'il tribe a powerful Shiite tribal faction based near Najaf, ambushed a group of Saudis near the city, slaughtering nearly 300 of them in cold blood. The massacre shocked Diriyah and ignited calls for vengeance across Najd. Diplomatic channels were initially pursued the Saudis formally protested the killings and demanded blood money (diyya) from the Ottoman wali of Baghdad. Ali Pasha dispatched a delegate Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al-Shawi, to Diriyah during his return from pilgrimage to mediate with Imam Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad. But the negotiations failed. Imam Abdul Aziz made it clear that the First Saudi State now considered the western bank of the Euphrates from Anah to Basra as part of its rightful domain This declaration represented a direct challenge to Ottoman authority and indicated that Diriyah was no longer willing to tolerate aggression from Iraq's Shiite militias without decisive military response the Saudis laid siege to Najaf in 1801 The siege starved the people of Najaf for one year but they couldn't manage to take over the city so they lifted the siege By 1802 the time for negotiation had passed. Imam Saud Al-Kabir, son of Abdul Aziz, led a formidable Saudi force northward into Ottoman Iraq. Their destination was Karbala, one of the most sacred cities in Shiite Islam. The campaign was driven by a mix of vengeance, religious zeal, and strategic calculation not only to retaliate for the massacre of 1799 but also to assert Wahhabi authority over the Shiite regions bordering Najd.

The Saudi army descended upon Karbala in a swift and devastating assault. The defenders were overwhelmed. The Saudis demolished shrines, including the gilded

dome of the tomb of Imam Hussein, a move that sent shockwaves throughout the Shiite world. They also looted the city's treasury and religious endowments before rapidly withdrawing southward, avoiding confrontation with the larger forces of Ali Pasha This attack deeply humiliated the Ottoman Empire and enraged the Qajar Shah of Iran, Fath-Ali Shah, who pressured the Ottoman governor to act. The Sublime Porte responded by issuing stern orders to Ali Pasha to halt further Saudi incursions. But the reach of the Saudis had grown and their incursions would not stop

The repercussions of the Karbala raid would echo beyond the battlefield. In 1803, Imam Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad, the ruler of the First Saudi State, was assassinated in Diriyah by a man named Mulla Uthman an Afghan from Baghdad who had witnessed the horrors of the Karbala sack. Disguised as a wandering dervish Uthman integrated himself among the townspeople of Diriyah. On a Friday during congregational prayer, as Imam Abdul Aziz bowed in ruku', Uthman lunged from behind and stabbed him fatally. He also wounded the imam's son Abdullah who swiftly retaliated and killed the assassin. The assassination shocked the Saudi state. Saud Al-Kabir ascended to leadership with a fury that matched his father's vengeance. In response to the assassination, Saud Al-Kabir launched a brutal punitive campaign against various Iraqi tribes and towns. His forces raided the Dhafir tribe, who were encamped in the springtime pastures of the desert. The raid resulted in mass pillaging Then Saud marched toward Basra in 1803 entered it by force, killed many of its people They then struck at a contingent of Al-Muntafiq tribesmen stationed near Basra. Their leader Mansur bin Thamir Al-Saadoun was captured and the remaining fighters were slain or driven off In 1803 Saudi forces stormed Zubayr leaving many dead and razing the structures at looted their farmlands especially those just coming to harvest and destroyed religious shrines located Among the demolished were the shrines of Talha ibn Ubayd Allah and Al-Hasan Al-Basri After completing the campaign the Saudi army returned to Diriyah, their mission fulfilled in blood and fire the complaints made by the shah of Persia Fath Ali about inability to protect the Shia holy places and the threat of Persian troops being sent to Karbala In fact, Persia found itself at war with the Baghdad pashalik just some years after the sack of Karbala. Remembering the unsuccessful expeditions to al-Hasa, however Baghdad deemed it impossible to defeat the Wahhabis in the depths of Arabia therefore Persian troops Started to reinforce Karbala and Najaf in 1804 Wahhabi forces launched a daring cross-border attack into southwestern Iran targeting the settlements of Meigran and Biziüs along the Persian Gulf coast the of Khuzestan Province. These raids which likely occurred between 1804 and 1806 followed the Wahhabi expansion into southern Iraq and their increasing naval activity in the northern Gulf. Advancing from the marshlands around Fao and Basra the Wahhabi Army under the command of Ibn Afisan bypassed formal Ottoman and defeated Persian troops the sacking the two towns, burning homes, seizing livestock, and disrupting the coastal supply lines to larger Qajar-controlled cities like Bushehr. Though the towns themselves held no major strategic value, the attack was a symbolic blow demonstrating the Wahhabis reach and unsettling Qajar confidence in their border security It also marked one of the few confirmed Wahhabi incursions directly onto Iranian soil intensifying Qajar resolve to confront the Saudi threat militarily After the fall of Karbala, the Wahhabis raided Iraq persistently for some years. At the end of 1804 and the beginning of 1805 Saud ibn Abd al-Aziz suddenly attacked the Muntafiq, plundered the environs of Basra Then his troops besieged Nasiriyah Jones an British agent fear the collapse of the empire In 1805 he estimated that Baghdad had lost 40 per cent of its commercial revenue in seven years owing to the damage to confidence

resulting from successive Wahhabi incursions in 1807 the previous Wahhabis 1810 an Campaign Led Abdallah bin Saud They departed from Diriyah that pushed north of Iraq The attack to the city Al Diwaniyah they broke through the city defences Plundering A sector of the city before continuing through their campaign A small Iraqi field force Was led by Hasan Al-Karimi was attacked by the forces of Abdallah Hasan Al Karimi was killed in the attack Abdallah continued the campaign A large force form Baghdad departed to end the Wahhabi campaign they met at the City of Al Azizyah it was a large battle which the forces of Abdullah emerged victorious and went near the vicinity of the Baghdad

Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud conquest of Bahrain (1811)

When the Persians got Defeated by the Wahhabis in Bahrain in 1811 the Wahhabi Resistance got captured by Al Khalifa. Once the Al Khalifa had recaptured and settled in Bahrain, they sent a fleet of sailing vessels toward the Qatari coast, where Rahmah and Ibn Ufaysan had taken shelter near Al Khuwayr. Both men had anticipated the possibility of conflict and had prepared their defenses in hopes of regaining control of Bahrain. The Al Khalifa, however, advanced under the cover of night and anchored their fleet offshore Upon seeing the glow of the approaching ships' lanterns, Rahmah suspected that the fleet was under the command of Sheikh Abdullah bin Ahmad Al Khalifa. Ibn Ufaysan dismissed the idea, stating that Sheikh Abdullah had been detained in Diriyah. Rahmah disagreed, arguing that the formation and silence of the fleet was the work of a skilled commander, and thus dispatched a scouting vessel with a lamp to investigate more closely. Noticing the scout's light, Sheikh Abdullah assumed the vessel belonged to Rahmah and responded with a strategic countermeasure, repositioning his fleet behind the light source to cut off Rahmah's escape to sea. This tactical movement confirmed Rahmah's suspicions and left his ships vulnerable between the shoreline and the enemy Rahmah ordered his fleet into open waters, led by his flagship ***Al-Manowar***, hoping to avoid encirclement. As dawn broke and the opposing fleets became visible, Rahmah expressed hesitation about engaging the Al Khalifa directly, citing their superior strength. Ibn Ufaysan interpreted this caution as weakness and provoked him with a traditional verse meant to stir courage. Insulted, Rahmah ordered the sails raised and committed to battle The fighting was intense and at close range. The ship of Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa collided with Rahmah's vessel, and shortly afterward, Sheikh Abdullah brought his own ship, ***Al-Tawila***, alongside them. The combat that followed was fierce. Rashid was killed, and heavy casualties were inflicted on both sides. During the exchange, the sails of both Rahmah's and Rashid's ships caught fire from the volleys of gunfire. The two vessels were destroyed in the flames. Only Sheikh Abdullah's ship escaped the burning wreckage Rahmah, wounded severely in his right hand, managed to flee by clinging to floating debris. Ibn Ufaysan also escaped in similar fashion. In the aftermath, Rahmah reproached Ibn Ufaysan for disregarding his earlier advice, asking whether he now understood the strength of the Utub confederation. Ibn Ufaysan, humbled by the defeat, offered no reply. Despite killing 1,000 Bahraini and Kuwaiti soldiers, including officers Duaij bin Sabah Al Sabah and Rashid bin Abdullah bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Ibn Jabir lost 300 troops and was forced to withdraw to defend Diriyah from Ottoman armies invading the western Hejaz from Yanbu on the Red Sea

Wahhabi raid on Syria (1807-1811)

The Wahhabi incursions into Ottoman Syria between 1807 and 1811 represented one of the boldest and most far-reaching campaigns of the First Saudi State under Imam Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, extending the influence of Diriyah to the northern frontiers of Arabia and deep into the Ottoman domains. Following their sweeping successes in eastern and central Arabia, and the conquest of the Hijaz in 1806, the Saudis turned their gaze toward the fertile provinces of Syria, the symbolic heartland of Ottoman authority in the Levant. The Wahhabi expansion northward was both ideological and strategic seeking to spread the reformist creed of tawhid (monotheism) while pressuring the Ottoman governors to acknowledge the supremacy of the emerging Saudi power From their base in Al-Jawf and Tayma Saudi forces began a series of raids into southern Syria, targeting Ottoman garrisons, tribal confederations, and trade routes linking Damascus to the Arabian Peninsula. The early years of the campaign were marked by impressive Saudi advances, as local Bedouin tribes long resentful of Ottoman taxation and conscription offered support or neutrality to the Wahhabi cause. The Saudis imposed their authority over Amman, the key outpost in the Balqa region, effectively extending their occupation northward and using it as a strategic base for operations against Syria. From Amman, Saudi detachments launched repeated incursions into the Hauran, the Damascus countryside, and along the caravan routes leading to the Holy Cities By 1810, Imam Saud himself led a large-scale expedition into the Syrian frontier, commanding a force reportedly numbering tens of thousands of tribal fighters. This formidable host advanced through Wadi Sirhan and into southern Syria, defeating local garrisons and securing the allegiance of various tribes. The Ottomans, unable to field a substantial army in the region due to their commitments against Napoleon and internal revolts, resorted to negotiations and the payment of tribute to avoid further devastation. Contemporary accounts and local chronicles suggest that Damascus and its provincial authorities were compelled to send gifts and payments to Diriyah, a tacit acknowledgment of Saudi dominance over the southern approaches to Syria The culmination of these operations occurred in 1810, when Imam Saud's army penetrated deep into Syrian territory and briefly sacked the outskirts of Damascus. Although the city itself was not fully occupied, the mere presence of Wahhabi forces so near the capital of Ottoman Syria sent shockwaves through the region. The Saudi fighters plundered villages, seized livestock, and exacted tribute, demonstrating the impotence of Ottoman authority in the Levant. The Wahhabi raids on Damascus became legendary, symbolizing the zenith of Saudi power during the early nineteenth century At the same time, not all raids met with success. Several expeditions into northern Hauran and the Aleppo countryside were repelled by local forces and Ottoman-aligned tribes, who had received reinforcements and material support from the governor of Damascus. Harsh winters, stretched supply lines, and internal rivalries among the tribal contingents also weakened the cohesion of the Wahhabi armies. By 1811, as the Ottomans prepared their counteroffensive under Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt, the Saudi frontier in Syria began to recede, with garrisons withdrawn to the south in preparation for the defense of the Hijaz and Najd Despite these setbacks, the Wahhabi raids on Ottoman Syria stand as one of the most remarkable episodes of the First Saudi State's expansion. They extended Saudi influence to the very gates of Damascus and forced the Ottoman authorities to acknowledge the Saudi Emirate as a regional power. The temporary Saudi occupation of Amman and the imposition of tribute on parts of Syria demonstrated that the balance of power in the Arabian Peninsula and indeed the entire Middle East had shifted dramatically in favor of Diriyah.

Though eventually reversed by Ottoman-Egyptian campaigns, these northern expeditions underscored the Saudis' military reach, their organizational ability, and the profound ideological confidence of a state that, for a brief but decisive moment, challenged the authority of the Ottoman Empire itself in its own Syrian provinces

The Ottoman-Saudi war (1811-1818)

In response to the expanding power of the Wahhabi state Sultan Mahmud II ordered Muhammad Ali Pasha, the governor of Egypt, to undertake a campaign against the Saudis in December 1807. Muhammad Ali, who had embarked upon an ambitious program of military and administrative reform, saw in this order an opportunity to strengthen his position in Egypt and to rid himself of restive troops whose loyalty he distrusted. The Ottoman court, meanwhile, viewed the conflict as advantageous either way the destruction of Muhammad Ali's power or that of the Wahhabis would equally serve imperial interests.

Delays within Egypt postponed the expedition until 1811, when Muhammad Ali's son, Tusun Pasha, led the first Egyptian-Ottoman force to the Arabian Peninsula. The army landed at Yanbu, a coastal city of the Hejaz, and the local Saudi garrison, numbering only about 300 men, surrendered without resistance. This allowed the Ottomans to reestablish a foothold on the Red Sea coast and prepare for an advance inland toward Medina, which had been under Wahhabi control since the Saudi conquest of the Hejaz The Ottomans next advanced to Badr, where they fought the Saudis in a brief but intense engagement that ended in Ottoman victory. The Saudi forces retreated to Wadi al-Safra, near Medina. At this point, the Ottomans fielded between 8,000 and 14,000 men. Upon hearing of the invasion, Saud bin Abdulaziz gathered a coalition of 18,000 troops and 800 cavalry from Najd, the Hejaz, and Tihamah. He dispatched his son, Abdullah bin Saud, to confront the Ottomans at Wadi al-Safra.

At the outset, Abdullah ordered Mas'ud bin Madhian to occupy the high ground near al-Kheif to prevent being outflanked. Initial skirmishes went poorly for the Saudis, who lost 32 men, but Abdullah reorganized his lines and prepared for a decisive confrontation. After three days of fierce fighting, the Wahhabi forces launched a massive counterattack that shattered the Ottoman ranks, killing between 4,000 and 5,000 men and forcing the survivors to retreat in disarray to Yanbu. Saudi losses were about 600, and seven Ottoman cannons were captured. The catastrophic defeat at al-Safra alarmed both Muhammad Ali and the Ottoman court in Istanbul. Reinforcements of nearly 20,000 Egyptian troops, supported by European-trained officers and artillery, were dispatched. By November 1812, Tusun renewed his offensive toward Medina. After several weeks of siege operations, the Ottomans breached the city's walls and captured it. Although Tusun had promised the garrison safe conduct, his subordinate Ahmad Bonaparte betrayed the terms and massacred many of the defenders. Mas'ud bin Madhian, the Saudi commander, was executed, an act that disgusted the Arab allies of the Ottomans After consolidating control over Medina, the Ottomans pushed toward

Mecca. Mustafa Bey, Muhammad Ali's brother-in-law, advanced with cavalry and infantry, aided by Sharif Ghalib ibn Musa'id, who preferred Ottoman rule to Saudi dominance. In January 1813, the Ottomans entered Mecca unopposed, proclaiming an amnesty for its inhabitants. Meanwhile, Saud bin Abdulaziz retaliated by mobilizing 20,000 troops and marching toward al-Hinakiyah, which had been captured by the Ottomans after the fall of Medina. The fortress, defended by 300 men under Osman Kashif, capitulated after a short siege. Saud honored his pledge of safe passage and escorted the garrison toward Iraq Saud continued his campaign by raiding the Harb tribes near Medina and defeating Ottoman cavalry at Mount Uhud. However, Ottoman momentum soon returned when Mustafa Bey and later Tusun Pasha launched fresh campaigns into southern Hejaz. At Turubah, the Ottomans met fierce resistance led by Ghaliyya al-Bughamiyyah, a widowed tribal leader who distributed her wealth to finance the Saudi defense. In August 1813, the first Ottoman assault failed disastrously. A second expedition under Tusun in late 1813 fared no better, as his exhausted army was harassed by the 'Utaybah, Nasira, and Banu Sa'd tribes before being routed near Turubah. The Ottomans lost about 700 men, many perishing from thirst during the retreat.

In 1814, Muhammad Ali attempted to regain the initiative by sending a naval expedition to al-Qunfudhah, commanded by Husayn Agha and Saym Oglu, with forty ships and 1,500 men. The city, held by Tami bin Shu'ayb of the 'Asir tribe, fell briefly to the Ottomans in March 1814, but the Saudis soon counterattacked with 8,000–10,000 men. The Albanian garrison panicked and fled to their ships, leaving behind hundreds of dead and their baggage. The Saudis captured around 400–500 horses and over a thousand tents Later that year, the Ottomans mounted another expedition of 20,000 men under 'Abidin Bey against the Zahran tribes in al-Bahah. Despite initial success, the Ottomans were decisively defeated by Tami bin Shu'ayb and Bakhrosh ibn 'Allas, losing 1,000 men and retreating to Taif. When the Saudis besieged Taif, Muhammad Ali intervened personally. Using deception, he tricked the defenders into believing a large relief force was coming, compelling them to withdraw.

In 1815, Muhammad Ali marched from Mecca toward Kolakh, where he faced a formidable Saudi army of 20,000–25,000 men under Faisal bin Saud, Tami bin Shu'ayb, and Bakhrosh ibn 'Allas. The Battle of Bissel (Byssel) was fought in the surrounding mountains. Initially, the Saudis held the advantage, but Muhammad Ali executed a feigned retreat that lured them into open terrain. The Ottomans counterattacked and inflicted massive losses, reportedly beheading 5,000 Saudis and capturing 300 prisoners, many of whom were later executed by impalement. This brutal display broke organized Saudi resistance in the Hejaz.

Following these defeats, Abdullah bin Saud sought peace, which Muhammad Ali accepted temporarily before turning his attention to internal Egyptian affairs. Nevertheless, hostilities soon resumed when Ibrahim Pasha, Muhammad Ali's eldest son, assumed command of a grand expedition against Najd in 1816. Landing at Yanbu with 8,000 men, Ibrahim advanced methodically through Medina and al-Hinakiyah toward the Najdi heartland, overcoming local resistance and securing tribal alliances In 1817, the Ottomans won a hard-fought engagement at Mawiyya, then laid siege to Ar Rass for nearly four months. The defenders, though courageous, eventually negotiated a truce allowing them to remain neutral. Ottoman losses numbered between 600 and 2,400, while the Saudis lost fewer than 160 men. The subsequent captures of al-Khabra, Unaizah, and Buraidah brought central Najd under Ottoman control By January 1818, Ibrahim besieged Dhurma, whose garrison resisted heroically before being

overwhelmed. The fall of Dhurma was followed by a massacre of its inhabitants; over 800 men were slain, and 3,000 women and children were taken captive The final act came with the Siege of Diriyah, the Saudi capital. Beginning in April 1818, Ibrahim Pasha's forces of nearly 7,600 men surrounded the fortified city. The Saudis, under Abdullah bin Saud, mounted fierce resistance, engaging the Ottomans in multiple sectorsAlab, Ghubaira, Samha, and 'Arqa over five months. Despite valiant defense, the city's supplies dwindled, and the walls were gradually breached. On September 9, 1818, Abdullah surrendered on the condition of safe conduct for his people and exile for himself When news of the fall of Diriyah reached Cairo and Istanbul, celebrations erupted. However, Muhammad Ali violated the treaty and ordered the city razed. Diriyah was burned, its scholars executed, and its population dispersed. Abdullah bin Saud was sent under guard to Cairo and then to Istanbul, where he was executed in 1819 The destruction of Diriyah marked the fall of the First Saudi State, bringing an end to Wahhabi political power in Arabia at least temporarily while affirming Muhammad Ali's ascendancy as the dominant regional power in the Ottoman Empire

The British campaign and the French Influence Against Diriyah

As the power of the Emirate of Diriyah expanded across Arabia and into the Persian Gulf the conflict inevitably drew the attention of European empires Both Britain and France competing fiercely for influence in the Indian Ocean sought to secure allies like Omani empire and Qajar Iran in the Gulf and to contain what they perceived as a growing Wahhabi menace The British East India Company had long been preoccupied with securing the maritime routes between India and the Gulf. The rise of the Al-Qasimi naval forces allied with Diriyah threatened British shipping and undermined their fragile hold on the region. From their base in Ras al-Khaimah the Qasimi launched raids on Gulf shipping, which London labeled as "piracy" though in reality it was part of their resistance against foreign intrusion Around 1805 the Wahhabis maintained an unsteady suzerainty over parts of the southern Persian coast. They implemented a system of organized attacks on foreign shipping The vice-regent of the Pirate Coast Husain bin Ali compelled the Qawasim chiefs to send their vessels to plunder all the trade ships of the Persian Gulf without exception He kept one-fifth of the loot for himself. Arnold Wilson suggests that the Qawasim tribe acted against their will so as not to incur the vengeance of the Wahhabis However, upon remarking on the rampant increase in piracy starting in 1805, J. G. Lorimer a British chronicler, perceives this view as extreme, and believes the Qawasim acted within their volition The strategic port-city of Ras Al Khaimah, the capital of the Qawasim, offered ample opportunity for Wahhabi vessels to conduct quick, decisive attacks on British vessels from India and in the Gulf. the Qawasim captured two large ships ***Shannon*** and ***Trimmer*** the small boats of the Qawasim swarmed the larger merchant ships and massacred the crews Lacking the available naval forces to launch a sizeable campaign in the Gulf, the British authorities attempted to use diplomacy to end the threat. In February 1806, the young Sultan of Oman, Sa'id II ibn Sultan, signed a treaty at Bandar Abbas promising to bring an end to attacks originating from his territory, but by 1807 the French had installed consulates in Tehran and Muscat In 1807, Lord Minto, Governor General of India, determined to send ambassadors to the Sikh Empire, Afghanistan and Persia in an effort to secure their

support and prevent the French from gaining allies on India's western borders. As part of this diplomatic campaign, the ambassador to Persia was instructed to discuss the problem with the Persian government, but due to French influence in Tehran he was unable to obtain any guarantees In April 1808, despite the brief deployment of the ship of the line HMS ***Albion***, and frigates HMS ***Phaeton*** and ***Dédaigneuse*** to the Arabian Gulf, Al Qasimi dhows appeared off Gujarat, raiding shipping at Surat before they were driven off by ships of the Bombay Marine. Later in the year, a huge fleet of 50 raiders appeared off Sind in the Arabian Sea and caused severe disruption to the regional trade. The fleet attacked merchant shipping along the Indian coast and even seized a large country ship named ***Minerva***, massacring her crew and converting her into their flagship. At its height in early 1809, it was estimated that the Al Qasimi forces in the Arabian Gulf and Arabian Sea included 60 large bhagalas, over 800 dhows, and employed 19,000 men, against just two HEIC ships, ***Mornington*** and ***Teignmouth*** In the aftermath of the raid on Sind and following the 1809 monsoon season, the British authorities in India decided to make a significant show of force against the Qawasim, in an effort not only to destroy their larger bases and as many ships as could be found, but also to counteract French encouragement of them from their embassies in Persia and Oman. Forces were gathered at Bombay during The expeditionary force left Bombay on 17 September, intending to rendezvous at Muscat the following week. However, the force was repeatedly delayed during their passage, first with providing escorts to convoys of country ships in the Arabian Sea The British flotilla arrived off the independent town of Ras Al Khaimah on 11 November, discovering ***Minerva*** and a fleet of dhows in the harbour he attack the city The operation's success was limited as the British did not press their advantage when invading Ras Al Khaimah and embarked without consolidating their gains[1] and failed to permanently suppress the strong fleets of the Qawasim of Ras Al Khaimah and Sharjah. The expedition did achieve its short-term goals by destroying three Al Qasimi bases and over 80 vessels, including the largest Al Qasimi ship in the region in 1810 The British tried to help the new ruler of Oman Said bin Sultan sending a military campaign against the Qawasim in Ras Al Khaimah in order to gain his trust so that he would stand by them and abandon the French assistance to him. However The British forces failed they were able to attack Al Qir but they were defeated by The Saudis British forces landed near Al Jazirah Al Hamra and Ajman The Saudis led by Mutlaq bin Muhammad al-Mutairi defeated the British in the battle of Ajman and the Saudis besieged Al jazirah manage to retake control of the city from the British forces and they withdrew back to India the British campaign failed in the face of the resistance of the Saudi commander Mutlaq Al Mutairi, who attacked the British forces and inflicted a great defeat on them in the year 1810 The French suggested to Said bin Sultan to reconcile with the Saudis in the year 1810 with the aim of forming a strong front from both sides but said try to convince the French to send troops to Oman lift the Saudi Stege of Bawshar the French was hesitant at first but they send 600 soldiers to muscat led by General Armand de Lavoisier he Recruited 400 soldiers from Oman He departed from Muscat he reached Bawshar he managed to break the siege Abdullah ibn Rashid al-Harbi Was surprised that he saw a French forces arrived at Oman he gathered his forces An attack of the French forces a battle ensued French cannons Inflicted heavy casualties on the Saudis Infantry Forces but Armand de Lavoisier had His flanks penetrated by Saudis Caverly Abdullah ibn Rashid ordered his his troops to outflank the French forces lifting heavy casualties to the north of the battle Armand de Lavoisier got killed in the battle and his forces withdrew from the battle and Assistant of The French commander was Henri de Villeneuve His reports to Paris emphasized both the strategic importance of Ras al-

Khaimah and the Wahhabi with its powerful land forces He argued that the Wahhabi movement though ideologically distant from European power could be manipulated as a counterweight to British and Ottoman interests in Arabia

The establishment Emirate of Najd

The first Saudi to attempt to regain power after the fall of the First Saudi state in 1818 was Mishari bin Saud, a brother of the last ruler in Diriyah, Abdullah ibn Saud but he was soon captured by Ottoman Egypt and killed. In 1824, Turki bin Abdullah, a grandson of the first Saudi imam Muhammad bin Saud who had managed to evade capture by the Ottomans , was able to expel Ottoman–Egyptian forces and their local allies from Riyadh and its environs and is generally regarded as the founder of the second Saudi dynasty as well as the ancestor of the kings of modern-day Saudi Arabia. He made his capital in Riyadh and was able to enlist the services of many relatives who had escaped captivity in Ottoman Egypt, including his son Faisal bin Turki.

The Ottoman-najd war 1819-1824

Following the Wahhabi expansion into the Hijaz, the Ottoman-Saudi War commenced, resulting in the defeat of Saudi forces and the subsequent capture of their capital, Diriyah, by Ibrahim Pasha, son of Muhammad Ali Pasha. Members of the Al Saud dynasty were compelled to flee and conceal themselves from pursuing Egyptian troops. Following Diriyah's occupation, Ibrahim Pasha established regional princes to administer Najd, though these appointments led to internal conflicts as various factions competed for dominance Ibrahim Pasha left Najd in ruins and suffering from famine before returning to Egypt. Following his departure, Muhammad bin Mishari bin Muammar traveled from Uyayna to the destroyed city of Diriyah and began its reconstruction. Many former residents who had fled during Ibrahim Pasha's campaign returned, and Ibn Muammar established Diriyah as the capital of his emirate. His territory expanded to include Al-Kharj, Riyadh, Huraymila, and Al-Washm Ibn Muammar governed much of Najd under Ottoman suzerainty until the appearance of Mishari bin Saud Al Saud, brother of Abdullah bin Saud. Having escaped captivity near Yanbu, Mishari hid in Al Washm, gathered Al Saud loyalists from Al Qassim and Az Zulfi, and marched on Diriyah. Though Ibn Muammar initially swore allegiance, he later reconsidered and mobilized forces in Sadus with support from Huraymila's leaders. With additional backing from Mutayr tribal leader Faisal bin Watban Al-Duwaish, Ibn Muammar captured Diriyah and imprisoned Mishari bin Saud in Sadus Following Mishari's capture, Ibn Muammar advanced on Riyadh where Turki bin Abdullah had taken refuge. Turki fled to Al-Ha'ir in southern Najd, prompting Ibn Mu'ammar to appoint his son Mishari as Riyadh's governor. Meanwhile, Muhammad Ali Pasha dispatched a 400-strong force under Abush Agha to capture Mishari. Learning of Turki bin Abdullah's presence in Dhruma, Ibn Muammar sent his son with 100 soldiers, but Turki defeated and captured them. Turki subsequently gained control of Diriyah and Riyadh, apprehended Ibn Muammar, and upon confirming Mishari's death in captivity, executed both Ibn Muammar and his son Faisal bin Watban Al-Duwish and Ghuboush Agha subsequently attempted to besiege Imam Turki bin Abdullah in Riyadh. Turki's

forces resisted successfully, forcing the siege's abandonment.[11] In response, Muhammad Ali Pasha ordered all Ottoman forces in Medina to march on Riyadh under Hussein Bey. The Ottoman column reached Riyadh unopposed and besieged Turki in the royal palace. Under cover of darkness, Turki and his supporters escaped to Al-Halwa in southern Najd.[12] The remaining defenders surrendered, with Hussein Bey executing 70 of Turki's supporters and capturing Omar bin Abdulaziz along with his son Abdul Malik Following Hussein Bey's withdrawal, Medina's governor Hassan Pasha dispatched an 800-strong cavalry force under Hassan Bey (Abu Zahir). This contingent ravaged Unaizah, Jabal Shammar, Al-Majma'ah, and Sudair, while attempts to collect zakat from Bedouins provoked widespread opposition across Najd. Months later, Ottoman forces from Riyadh and Manfuha under Ibrahim Kashif (brother of Musa Kashif), accompanied by local emirs Nasser bin Nasser Al-Aydhi and Musa bin Mazrou, attacked the Subaie tribe at Al-Bada' south of Riyadh. The Subaie, led by Sheikh Muhammad bin Daghim Al-Omani, routed the Ottomans, killing over 300 soldiers including Ibrahim Kashif and Nasser Al-Aydi The Ottoman garrison at Al Majma'ah, commanded by Musa Kashif, attacked the nearby Sahul tribe but suffered defeat with over 30 soldiers killed, including Kashif. Survivors retreated to Al Majma'ah alongside Unaizah's emir Abdullah Al Jami'i Residents of Unaizah revolted against their 600-strong Ottoman garrison led by Muhammad Agha, protesting oppressive taxation and misconduct. After besieging the troops in Al-Safa Palace and killing approximately seventy soldiers, a peace agreement allowed the Ottomans to withdraw, leaving only the Riyadh garrison in Najd During Ramadan 1823, Turki bin Abdullah returned with 30 men, secured support from Al-Mahmal, Jaljal, and Sudair leaders,[16] and established Arqa as his base. His assault on the 600-strong Ottoman garrisons in Riyadh and Manfuha failed, forcing withdrawal to Arqa where he repelled an Ottoman counterattack. In late 1823, Turki advanced from Arqa to capture Dhurma, killing its emir. As conflict fragmented Najd, Turki defeated opposing leaders including Mazid bin Ahmed of Al Majma'ah and Hamad bin Mubarak of Huraymila. The rulers of Zulfi, Al-Ghat, Manikh, Sudair, and Shaqra surrendered without resistance. Manfuha capitulated after negotiations with Emir Ibrahim bin Salamah, who expelled its Ottoman garrison to join Riyadh's forces By August 1824, Turki mobilized all forces from Manfuha to besiege Riyadh. After initial clashes forced Ottoman troops into the city, a month-long siege ensued. Turki temporarily withdrew when Faisal Al-Dawish reinforced the Ottomans, but resumed the attack after Al-Dawish's departure. Garrison commander Abu Ali Al-Maghribi negotiated safe passage before surrendering, marking the Ottoman withdrawal from Najd While the Ottoman Empire focused on the Greek War of Independence, Turki expanded his authority through campaigns in Al-Kharj, Al-Qassim, and Jabal Shammar. By 1828, all Najd recognized his rule. After his son Faisal escaped Egyptian captivity, Turki dispatched him against the Bani Khalid Emirate. The subsequent Battle of Al Subia saw Faisal's forces from the Qahtan, Ajman, and Subay' tribes defeat Emir Majid bin Ariar (allied with Anazah). Majid's death precipitated Al Saud's conquest of Al Ahsa and Qatif

Saudi reconquer of Al Hasa (1830)

According to oral traditions and the writings of local historians, the conflict began as a skirmish between Majid bin Arʿir of Banu Khalid and warriors of the Sibaʿi tribe. When Imam Turki bin Abdullah, founder of the Second Saudi State, learned of the fighting, he

dispatched his son Faisal bin Turki to join the war while he himself remained occupied with consolidating Saudi power in Najd Imam Faisal marched with these forces and encamped between Majid bin Ar'ir's army and the spring of Fiḍat Ma'qila, a vital water source near Hazwa, effectively cutting Banu Khalid off from water.
The fighting raged for days in a series of cavalry engagements, charges, and retreats. In the first days of Ramadan, Majid bin Ar'ir was killed, and the news of his death spread quickly. When word reached Imam Turki, he personally rode out during the last ten days of Ramadan to join his son.
The struggle intensified, with champions and warriors clashing on both sides. In the heat of battle, Mutlaq al-Musahkh of Siba'i was killed, as well as Faghran bin Ar'ir, commander of the Banu Khalid forces, who fell at the hand of Tahus al-'Udhaybi of Siba'I Finally, on the morning of the 27th of Ramadan, 1245 AH (March 1830 CE), the army of Banu Khalid collapsed in defeat. Muhammad bin Ar'ir, the surviving leader, fled with the remnants of his force and took refuge in Al-Ahsa. Imam Turki advanced and granted him safe conduct in return for his surrender. With this, Al-Ahsa passed under Saudi control Second Saudi State, and the decisive blow came with their crushing defeat at the Battle of Al-Sabiyya 1830 The victory at Al-Sabiyya brought all of Najd, Al-Ahsa, and parts of the Arabian Gulf coast firmly under the authority of the Second Saudi State

Egyptian Expedition to Najd (1836)

The removal of Ottoman forces from Najd in 1824 marked an opportunity for the Saudi-Wahhabi alliance to reassert its control over the region. Turki Ibn Abdullah was able to accomplish this while tacitly acknowledging the suzerainty of Muhammad Ali, he captured Riyadh, Arid, Kharj, Mahmal, Sudayr and Aflaj with forces he was able to gather in the areas surrounding Riyadh. By 1830 he was able to assert his authority over Hasa but had minimal control over Qasim and Ha'il. He restricted his campaigns to avoid provoking the Ottoman forces in the Hejaz. By 1831 his authority was challenged by internal divisions within his own family which resulted in his assassination in 1834 by his cousin Mishari who was then killed by Turki's son Faisal who then assumed the position of Imam. By 1837 Faisals refusal to pay tribute to the Ottoman forces in the Hejaz provoked them to march against him
Faisal sent his brother to Mecca with presents, submissive words and offers of some camels for transport while he secretly helped his Asiri allies. Despite this act, Mehmet Ali organised an expedition against Najd in 1836 Mehmet Ali's forces landed at Yanbu in 1836 and marched against Najd. They were accompanied by Khalid, a Saudi pretender. Faisal assembled an army and went out to meet the invaders, however his troops melted away as word spread of the superior enemy forces. The people of Riyadh were also intimidated by the enemy forces and refused to fight. Faysal was able to slip out with a number of followers and Khalid entered Riyadh in 1837. For a while Mehmet Ali accepted the submission of Faisal and left the two Saudi chiefs ruling over a partitioned Najd, but in 1838 Mehmet Ali's forces commanded by Hurshid Pasha marched against Faisal and defeated him Faisal was then taken captive and imprisoned in Cairo Mehmet Ali had occupied Najd, al-Hasa and Qatif. He also secured the submission of Bahrain, Qatar and Trucial Oman and won the cooperation of Kuwait European pressure and British diplomacy led to the recall of most of the army from Najd and eastern Arabia in April 1840. The rule over Najd ended by the close of 1841. Faisal, however, escaped from Cairo in 1843. He then killed Ibn Thunayan and began his second reign over the

Saudi state. This time he recognised the suzerainty of the Ottoman Sultan and paid an annual tribute in exchange for an Ottoman recognition of himself as ruler of all the Arabs

Invasions and conflict with Bahrain (1847-1852)

Faisal's ambitions extended beyond these territories. In 1847, he attempted to intervene in Bahrain, exploiting internal conflicts within the ruling family. Although unsuccessful in capturing Bahrain, he settled for a peace agreement that included a tribute payment. His inability to seize Bahrain was primarily due to attacks on the Al-Qassim Province by Muhammad bin Awn and Khalid bin Saud, and the firm stance of the British government against Saudi expansion in the Persian Gulf. The British, who had substantial interests in the region, closely monitored Faisal's movements. Their support for the Bahraini sheikh and their strategic positions in the Gulf influenced the broader regional dynamics In 1851, Faisal launched his third attempt to capture Bahrain. In May of that year, he ordered his forces to proceed towards Al Bidda, Qatar, which was intended to be used as a staging area for an invasion of Bahrain. In response, Ali bin Khalifa, the Bahraini representative in Qatar, called on all men of fighting age to defend Al Bidda, as well as sending for help from Saeed bin Tahnun Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi. Faisal's strategic moves included securing support from regional leaders, including Sultan bin Saqr Al Qasimi of Sharjah and Maktoum bin Butti bin Suhail of Dubai, ensuring the loyalty of local tribes, and promising to restore order and stability. Faisal's efforts to enlist the support of Abdullah bin Ahmad Al Khalifa's sons were likely intended to frame his campaign as a family matter, thus minimizing the likelihood of British intervention Qatari tribes pledged their intention on defending Al Bidda from the Wahhabis, and provided Ali bin Khalifa with ample amounts of munitions, crafts and fighting men. Their combined forces blockaded Qatif Port in an attempt to deter Faisal's forces. However, on 18 May, upon hearing that Faisal's forces were only two days away from Al Bidda, the joint Qatari-Bahraini forces returned to Qatar and relayed events to Saeed bin Tahnoun, requesting immediate reinforcements Historical accounts of the conflict vary, and few specifics are known with certainty. All sources state that the battle began on 2 June and lasted for three days. According to the Wahhabi historian Uthman Ibn Bishr, the conflict began when Imam Faisal bin Turki ordered his son Abdullah to lead a contingent of Wahhabis to besiege Al Bidda fortress. Abdullah and his forces surrounded the fortress, prompting Ali bin Khalifa and his followers to flee to Bahrain by ship, leaving behind the fortress and its munitions. Upon learning of this, the people of Qatar sought peace from Faisal, claiming they were overpowered and coerced. Faisal accepted their plea, and they pledged allegiance to him, adhering to the faith of Wahhabism. British political resident Samuel Hennell, in a report to Arthur Malet, Secretary to the Government of British India in Bombay on 18 June, 1851 gives a differing account. He noted the defeat of the Wahhabi forces on 2 June. A subsequent confrontation occurred at Mesaimeer near Al Bidda on 4 June, rendering the situation on the Qatari coast highly unstable. By 6 June, Ali bin Khalifa and Saeed bin Tahnun were forced to evacuate the fort, leaving Al Bidda. At this juncture, Mohammed bin Thani, the Sheikh of Al Bidda, shifted his allegiance to Faisal bin Turki, aiding the latter in taking control of the region. The accounts of both the Saudi and British narratives omit details of the battle and the role of Qatari troops in repelling the invasion. The British account particularly labels the Qataris as treacherous, echoing Ali bin Khalifa's

sentiment towards Mohammed bin Thani's actions. This perspective might have been influenced by British reliance on information from the Bahraini Sheikh
According to an oral account by Muhammad ibn Ahmad, documented in Nasser bin Ali Al Thani's book ***Glimpses of Qatari History***, the battle lasted three days. On the first day, a skirmish of gunfire ensued between the Bahraini-Qatari forces and those of Faisal ibn Turki without any close combat. On the second day, Qatari forces, led by Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani, engaged Faisal's troops in a fierce battle while the Bahraini forces retreated to their ships, observing from the sea and not participating in the battle. During the hostilities, Jassim bin Mohammed killed Fares Al-Otaibi, a high-ranking Wahhabi officer in close quarters. On the third day, Faisal's forces retreated to their camp at Mesaimeer. Mohammed bin Thani advised Ali bin Khalifa to make peace with Faisal, fearing a renewed attack once they had regrouped. This suggestion was rebuffed by Ali bin Khalifa, who perceived it as betrayal Shortly after the final day of battle, Mohammed bin Thani sent a letter to Faisal bin Turki's camp requesting peace and agreeing to be his subject, to which Faisal obliged. On 8 June, Qatari forces assumed control of Burj Al-Maah, a watchtower guarding Doha's main water source, close to Al Bidda Fort where the allied forces of Ali bin Khalifa and Saeed bin Tahnoun were stationed. Upon hearing the news, they fled to Bahrain without incident, much to the dismay of Faisal who admonished Mohammed bin Thani for not capturing them The ruler of Bahrain, Muhammad bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, having been made aware of events, ordered a naval blockade of Al Bidda in June 1851. He also sent Hamad bin Mohammed Al Khalifa to inform British political resident Samuel Hennell of his concerns of a joint Wahhabi-Qatari invasion and requested protection, stating that he was willing to be a British subject in exchange for such protection. The British originally rejected this proposition.
However, upon further analysis of the situation, Justin Sheil, a high-ranking British diplomat in Persia, concluded that Faisal bin Turki's control of the Qatari Peninsula would be detrimental to British interests as it would provide the Ottoman Empire with an opportunity to incorporate Bahrain under its aegis in the event of a joint Qatari-Wahhabi invasion of the island. Thus, on 1 July, Hennel directed multiple British warships to be sent to protect Manama Harbor in Bahrain. He then warned Faisal bin Turki against launching any naval invasions of the island. He also wrote a letter to Mohammed bin Thani, in which he stated that, although it was not the intention of the British to interfere in a tribal dispute in which they were uninvolved, it was necessary to do so to prevent the Ottomans from establishing a stronghold on the Arabian Peninsula. In closing, he warned Thani against invading the Bahraini coast. To counteract any potential invasions from mainland Saudi Arabia, Bahraini ruler Muhammad bin Khalifa dispatched a naval force comprising 11 vessels, manned by a complement of nearly 800 men, under the command of Sheikh Ali bin Khalifa, formerly the Bahraini representative at Al Bidda. This fleet was tasked with the blockade of Qatif port. The blockading force, however, soon found itself engaged by a superior flotilla of 18 warships, manned by Utubi exiles from Qais Island allied with Faisal bin Turki. In the ensuing naval action, the Qais party suffered considerable losses, including the deaths of several notable personages: Mubarak bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, his brother Rashid bin Abdullah, and Bashir bin Rahma, son of Rahmah ibn Jabir al-Jalhami. The total casualties on the Qais side amounted to no fewer than 150 men. The untimely demise of Faisal's Qais confederate, Mubarak, necessitated a reorientation in strategy. Relinquishing his designs upon Bahrain, the Wahhabi Amir made a conciliatory overture on 20 July, 1851, proposing to dispatch his two brothers and son to parley with Ali bin Khalifa aboard his

ship. This proposal, however, met with unequivocal rejection from Ali bin Khalifa. In his increasing desperation for a peaceful resolution, Faisal enlisted Ahmed bin Mohammad Sudairi, the chief of Al Ahsa, as mediator. Sudairi's proposition to confer with Ali bin Khalifa aboard the latter's vessel was rebuffed with the reply: “If you come without demands, you are welcome if not, stay away." This intransigence on Ali bin Khalifa's part was bolstered by active British support, manifest in the deployment of their naval squadron off Al Bidda's coast to forestall any invasion of Bahrain by the allied forces stationed at Al Bidda and Doha. Despite the abortive Sudairi mission, peace negotiations persisted. Saeed bin Tahnun of Abu Dhabi, who enjoyed amicable relations with both contending parties, acceded to a request from the Sultan of Muscat and Sheikh of Sharjah to mediate the Wahhabi-Bahraini dispute. Their intervention was motivated by apprehensions that Faisal's prolonged sojourn in Qatar posed a threat to the security of the Trucial coast Sheikh Saeed's mediation efforts, commencing in the third week of July 1851, finished by 25 July. The resultant accord stipulated that Sheikh Ali would remit 4,000 German krones annually as zakat to Faisal, while the latter agreed to restore Al Bidda Fort to Ali bin Khalifa and to abstain from interference in Qatari affairs or on behalf of Abdullah bin Ahmed's sons. This agreement, ratified by Mohammad bin Khalifa of Bahrain and acquiesced to by Mohammad bin Thani of Qatar, led to Faisal's departure for Al Ahsa on 26 July, 1851. Consequent to this, Bahrain lifted its blockade of Qatif, and the British withdrew their naval presence. Despite the peace agreement being signed earlier, Al Bidda's blockade was only lifted on 2 August, 1851 Despite the peace treaty between the Emirate of Nejd and Bahrain signed in July 1851, tensions would again arise between the two in early 1852, as Muhammad bin Khalifa would once again relay his concerns to British diplomats that Faisal was preparing to invade Bahrain

Faisal bin Turki campaign of Oman (1851-1853)

The death of Said bin Sultan, the ruler of Muscat and Zanzibar, in 1856 would later split the Omani empire, but even before his death, divisions within the Omani aristocracy left the coast vulnerable. Faisal sought both to enforce Saudi religious authority, extending Wahhabi doctrine into Oman, and to secure strategic ports that would allow him to control Gulf trade and pilgrimage routes In 1851, Faisal bin Turki launched a campaign into Oman, mobilizing his Najdi warriors along with allied tribes from Al-Buraimi, Al-Duru‘, and the Na‘im. His goal was not only political dominance but also to impose Wahhabi authority upon the Omani interior, where Ibadi traditions often conflicted with Najdi doctrine Faisal advanced first into Al-Buraimi oasis Saudis and the rulers of Muscat. From here, Saudi detachments pushed toward the Omani heartland he managed to defeat the Omani army Near ibri The Saudi advance was swift. Faisal’s forces commanded by trusted lieutenants and tribal allies, captured strongholds in the interior, rallying local tribes sympathetic to Wahhabi teachings. Key confrontations took place near Ibri, Rustaq, and Nakhal, where Omani loyalists loyal to Said bin Sultan’s heirs attempted to resist The most decisive stage of the campaign came in 1853, when Faisal’s forces moved to assert dominance over Al-Buraimi once and for all establishing a Wahhabi garrison The campaign did not achieve the outright conquest of Muscat, but it established Saudi dominance over the Omani interior for several years. The Saudis held Al-Buraimi and its surroundings firmly under their control but short-lived and the garrisons Retreated back to najd

Saudi-Abu Dhabi conflicts (1848-1865)

It was ordered to be built by Sheikh Saeed bin Tahnoun Al Nahyan, who ruled the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the period from 1845 AD to 1855 AD to be the first line of Defence for the Al Ain oases and to be a link and a rest area on the road that connects Al Ain to Abu Dhabi and the western region such as Al Dhafra and Liwa which created tension with Saudis in najd the Saudis send it a small army to occupy the site of a water well in the Al Dhafra Saeed bin Tahnoun Al Nahyan with the support of the forces of Bani Yas Manage to defeat the Saudi forces in Al-Anka and Faisal bin Turki was angered about the news of the Defeat but he was preoccupied with Omani empire in 1851-1858 By the early 1860s Abu Dhabi experience raids by the Saudis army Faisal Launched an attack against Al-Khatim which was occupied by the Abu Dhabi commander Khalfan bin Rashid Al-Mazrouei He was order to stop the Attack Faisal Managed to defeat Khalfan in Al-Khatim with the accoutrements of the victory Faisal also attacked Al-Wathba Abu Dhabi retaliated against the Saudis led by Zayed bin Khalifa Al Nahyan His forces to attack a Saudi military outpost in Shawwalah The attack was successful and destroy the outpost. an Najdi-led band pushed to Mirfa and the fishing-pearling anchorages along the Dhafra coast looting it By 1862, Imam Faisal intensified his pressure, sending reinforcements under his sons and trusted commanders. A notable clash occurred near Al-Hamriyah, where Saudi-allied Bedouin forces overwhelmed a Sharjawi detachment, burning palm groves and carrying off spoils British officials stationed in the Gulf reported frequent “Wahhabi incursions” into the Trucial States during this period, noting that they disrupted the fragile peace established by earlier truces. Though the British Royal Navy maintained dominance at sea, they found themselves unable to check Saudi mobility inland British forces landed in Trucial States In 1863, the raids expanded further north into Ajman and Umm Al-Quwain. Oases and settlements loyal to the coastal sheikhs however these raids were very unsuccessful because for the British troops stationed there Faisal’s representatives in Al mubarraz received reports from tribal leaders near The territory of Abu Dhabi acknowledging British forces in the region the raids have been halted by the orders from Faisal’s

British led-intervention (1865)

In late 1865, the Saudis invaded Oman and headed towards the city of Saham. At that time, Oman was allied with the United Kingdom, and a British Indian had been killed by drowning during the attack. This prompted the British to send an ultimatum to Faisal, who died in December of that year. The message was sent to Abdullah bin Faisal. The British sought an official apology for the death of the drowned Indian and of ten other Indians who were plundered and demanded that the Saudis pay the equivalent of US$27,000 in reparations while also requiring assurance that no such attack would occur in the future. If he failed to reply in 17 days, the British warned they would attack the Saudis' forts on the coast. The British ship HMS ***Highflyer,*** which had been sent to Abdullah, returned to Qatif on January 30. Finding no response from the Saudis, the British launched their attack on Dammam On February 2, the HMS ***Highflyer*** was sent to attack the Saudi forts at Qatif and Dammam. At Qatif, the British entered the harbor and destroyed a small fort called Burj Abul Lif, alongside a vessel, and then on the next day, the ship arrived in Dammam, led by Lieutenant Long. To destroy, if possible, the

fort there, a party was landed, which had to walk through water some considerable distance from the fort, and attacked the place there, but finding the fort garrison much stronger than expected and unable to create an entrance, they were repulsed with a loss of three killed and five wounded (two officers and three men). On February 4, the attack was renewed. Taking advantage of rising water, the fort was bombarded with shots, shells, and rockets; however, the walls could not be breached, and the fort remained in the hands of the Saudis The attack's failure was due to ignorance of local knowledge of the territory and experience, with only one native Arab accompanying the British expedition When the HMS Highflyer returned to Muscat on February 9, Captain Lewis Pelly learned of the defeat at Dammam and was determined to reassert British authority by punishing the Janabah tribe of Sur after they had already refused to pay compensation to the British

The Najdi Civil War (1865–1875)

After the decline of Faisal bin Turki's authority in the later years of his reign, succession disputes fractured the Emirate of najd Faisal's sons Abdullah Saud and Abdul Rahman each sought power drawing tribal, regional, and family loyalties into bitter conflict When Faisal bin Turki died in 1865, his son Abdullah bin Faisal initially succeeded him as Imam. Yet Abdullah faced stiff opposition from his brother Saud bin Faisal, who quickly rallied support among disaffected tribes and urban factions dissatisfied with Abdullah's leadership. Saud's reputation as a more charismatic and generous leader allowed him to gather followers from the Ajman, Mutair, and some elements of the Sudair region Abdul Rahman bin Faisal's Role
In this fratricidal conflict, another of Faisal's sons Abdul Rahman bin Faisal (the future last ruler of the Second Saudi State) emerged as a loyal supporter of Abdullah. He fought alongside his brother in several campaigns, seeking to preserve the stability of Riyadh against Saud's forces.
By the early 1870s, however, the civil war intensified. Saud's men gained the upper hand in successive clashes, especially as the tribes of Qahtan and elements of the Bani Khalid rallied to his banner. Abdul Rahman struggled to hold the line, commanding loyalist contingents but lacking the manpower to decisively check Saud's momentum. The Defeat of Abdul Rahman The turning point came in the mid-1870s, when Saud's forces decisively overran Abdul Rahman's positions. Accounts from Najdi tradition recount a chaotic retreat, during which Abdul Rahman and his supporters were forced to abandon Riyadh. His defeat culminated in his exile to Ha'il, where he sought the protection of the Rashidi Emirate, rivals of the Al Saud The Najdi Civil War weakened the Emirate of najd at a critical moment. Instead of consolidating power and resisting external rivals, the House of Saud was torn apart by internal rivalry and tribal factionalism

Al-Hasa Expedition (1871)

Several months into his reign, on March 29, 1871, Imam Abdullah bin Faisal dispatched his envoy Abdul Aziz bin Suwailem to Medhat Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Baghdad, seeking assistance in the conflict against his brother Saud bin Faisal. Saud controlled the

regions of Al-Ahsa and Qatif, territories that had been wrested from Imam Abdullah bin Faisal The campaign departed Basra on April 20, comprising five infantry columns, a cavalry division and artillery units under the command of Lieutenant General Naser Pasha. Accompanying the force was the Sheikh of Al-Muntafiq, leading approximately 1,000 volunteer horsemen from his tribe. Additional men from various other Iraqi tribes convened in the town of Az Zubayr. Muhammad Saeed Effendi, son of the captain of supervision in Basra, also joined the commander in the expedition. A naval contingent from Kuwait joined the campaign, provided by the ruler of Kuwait, Sheikh Abdullah II Al-Sabah, who personally led a fleet of eighty ships. The fleet arrived at Ras Tanura on May 13, 1871, coinciding with the Ottoman infantry's land march towards Al-Ahsa. From Ras Tanura, the forces progressed towards Qatif, engaging in fierce battles with Saud bin Faisal's supporters, resulting in Qatif's capture on June 3, 1871. Subsequently, the campaign advanced to Dammam then to Hofuf
Following the Ottoman conquest of Al-Ahsa, Midhat Pasha reneged on his commitment to Imam Abdullah bin Faisal, and the province of Al-Ahsa was separated from the second Saudi state. Al Hasa was reincorporated into the Ottoman Empire and became known as the Najd Sanjak. For his significant contributions to the campaign, Sheikh Abdullah II Al-Sabah the ruler of Kuwait was bestowed the honorific title of Kaymakam by the Ottoman authorities

The rise of Jabal Shammar and war with the Saudi (1883-1891)

By 1299 AH, relations between Imam Abdullah bin Faisal Al Saud and Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Rashid, ruler of Jabal Shammar, had deteriorated significantly. Tensions escalated when Imam Abdullah besieged Al-Majma'ah, prompting the town's residents to seek assistance from Ibn Rashid. At this time, Imam Abdullah was supported by the people of Al-'Aridh and the 'Utaybah Bedouins, but after the siege ended, the 'Utaybah dispersed, and no direct fighting occurred. Following this, Muhammad bin Saud Al Saud, nicknamed "Ghazalan" for his striking appearance, courage, and poetic talent, mobilized the 'Utaybah to oppose their common enemy, Ibn Rashid. The tribe had long suffered from Ibn Rashid's raids, and despite repeated attempts, he had failed to subjugate them. Large contingents of 'Utaybah joined Imam Abdullah, conducting raids against Ibn Rashid's supporters in southern areas of Jabal Salma and deeper into Ibn Rashid's territory, posing a serious threat to Hail and its surroundings.
News of Ghazalan's raids reached Hail, where the poet Fajhan al-Farawi composed a poem praising Ghazalan while warning him against provoking the Al Rashid. Ghazalan responded with his own verses, issuing a bold threat to the Rashid even if they were in the heart of their emirate in Barzan, Hail.
Following this exchange, Ghazalan began mobilizing for a raid, selecting the water source at Urwah in the lands of 'Utaybah as a gathering point, conveniently located for the tribe's factions. Leaders and warriors from all over 'Utaybah assembled: Sheikh 'Aqab bin Shabnan bin Humayd, his cousin Prince Muhammad bin Hindi, the Barqa clans, Sheikh Hadhall bin Fahid from 'Add Qattan, Sheikh Manna al-Haydal, and the Ruqah contingents under Prince Turki bin Sultan bin Rabiaan. Other notable figures included Prince Nasser bin Muhayya and Prince Sunitan al-Dhait. The forces held war councils and prepared to march toward Hail Upon assembling at 'Urwah, a scout

reported that Ibn Rashid and his army were approaching. Ibn Rashid's forces included troops from Hail, Buraidah, and the surrounding Shammar territories, combining both urban and Bedouin contingents. Muhammad bin Saud "Ghazalan" led the initial engagement with the 'Utaybah. The early phase of the battle was marked by exceptional bravery from Ghazalan, who was thrown from three horses during the combat yet continued to fight, being lifted and remounted by his warriors each time. The 'Utaybah's cavalry initially overwhelmed Ibn Rashid's forces, causing parts of his army to retreat. However, the intervention of Hassan Al Muhanna, Emir of Buraidah, and his forces from Qassim turned the tide. His disciplined troops reinforced Ibn Rashid, stabilizing his lines and transforming a near-defeat into a decisive victory. Key casualties among the 'Utaybah included Sheikh Muhammad bin Hindi, who continued to fight despite being wounded by a stray bullet, and Sheikh Ghazi bin Siyaf bin Muhayya, who fell from his horse but was rescued by his cousins Nasser, Saddah, and Zaid bin Muhayya. Poet Sidran bin Shuhaiman al-Hammadi praised the valor of the 'Utaybah leaders, highlighting the courage of the Al Humayd and Turki bin Sultan bin Rabiaan. Despite the 'Utaybah's bravery, Ibn Rashid's well-organized cavalry and strategic coordination with the Shammar and Qassim contingents secured victory. The remaining 'Utaybah forces scattered into the valleys and ravines following the defeat. Ibn Rashid then sent emissaries to inform Rakan bin Hathleen of the triumph over 'Utaybah. While the battle demonstrated the tribe's courage, the structured military command of Ibn Rashid's forces ultimately ensured their succession In 1889 CE relations between Prince Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Rashid of Jabal Shammar and his former ally, Hassan bin Muhanna Aba al-Khail, Emir of Buraidah, began to deteriorate. The spark came from disputes over the collection of zakat in certain districts of Qassim. These revenues, traditionally paid to Ibn Muhanna, were instead claimed by Ibn Rashid, who sent his own men to collect them. A clash ensued, marking the beginning of their enmity. Hassan bin Muhanna eventually abandoned his alliance with Ibn Rashid and forged a new one with Zamil bin Sulaym, Emir of Unayzah. At the same time, Hassan began corresponding with Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal Al Saud, encouraging him to eliminate Ibn Subhan, whom Ibn Rashid had appointed governor of Riyadh. Abdulrahman seized the opportunity: he captured Ibn Subhan, seized his treasury and weapons, and informed his new allies of his success, urging them to join him in confronting Ibn Rashid.

Ibn Rashid's March on Riyadh Muhammad bin Rashid, unwilling to tolerate such defiance, mobilized his forces and marched toward Riyadh in Muharram 1308 AH (August 1890 CE) On his way, he passed through Qassim, where the local people initially opposed him. But Ibn Rashid placated them with promises: he vowed not to attack their lands, to grant them control over the Mutayr Bedouins, and to share the khuwah tribute levied on pilgrims. In exchange, they agreed not to support Abdulrahman bin Faisal. Continuing southward, Ibn Rashid besieged Riyadh on 5 Safar 1308 AH (19 September 1890 CE). The city held out for forty days before negotiations were arranged by Muhammad bin Faisal Al Saud, leading to a prisoner exchange: Ibn Rashid released members of the Al Saud family in his custody in return for the release of Ibn Subhan. Ibn Rashid then withdrew to Hail, though his promises to the people of Qassim soon went unfulfilled, setting the stage for a greater confrontation. The Road to Al-Mulaydah

When Ibn Rashid's duplicity became clear, the people of Qassim appealed once again to Abdulrahman bin Faisal for aid. Meanwhile, Ibn Rashid summoned his allies from across Jabal Shammar and mobilized his army. By Jumada I 1308 AH (December 1890 CE), both sides prepared for battle. On 3 Jumada II (13 January 1891), Ibn Rashid's army

encamped at Al-Qara while the forces of Qassim occupied defensive positions in the sandy terrain nearby. In the opening skirmishes, the advantage lay with the defenders, as the sandy ground hampered Ibn Rashid's cavalry. Recognizing the difficulty, Ibn Rashid shifted his army to the plains of Al-Mulaydah, where his cavalry could maneuver freely The Battle of Al-Mulaydah

On Friday 12 Jumada II 1308 AH (22 January 1891 CE) Ibn Rashid positioned his forces at Al-Mulaydah. His strategy was unconventional: he placed camels at the front lines, shielding his cavalry from enemy fire. On Saturday, 13 Jumada II (23 January), the battle commenced in earnest The camels charged into the ranks of the Qassim army, sowing confusion. Behind them came Ibn Rashid's cavalry, striking both flanks. Fighting raged throughout the morning and into the afternoon. The people of Qassim fought with determination, but the superior organization and tactics of Ibn Rashid's forces gradually prevailed Casualties were heavy. Among the slain was Zamil bin Sulaym, Emir of Unayzah. Hassan bin Muhanna fought valiantly but suffered a broken arm from a musket shot. He was captured and sent in chains to Hail, where he remained imprisoned until his death in 1320 AH (1902 CE). Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal, who had been marching with his own men to support the Qassim coalition, learned of the defeat en route. He turned back to Riyadh, evacuated his family, and fled to the Bedouins of the Ajman tribe in Al-Ahsa.

The Pursuit and the Battle of Huraymila

Though victorious, Ibn Rashid was not content. He pursued Abdulrahman bin Faisal into the Najdi countryside. Abdulrahman regrouped briefly, gaining the support of Ibrahim bin Muhanna Aba al-Khail and elements of the Ajman. In early 1309 AH (1891 CE), they seized Al-Dilam and Al-Kharj before advancing toward Riyadh.

Yet Ibn Rashid, well-informed through his network of spies, struck preemptively. Near the town of Huraymila, he surprised Abdulrahman's forces before they could form proper ranks. The result was another crushing defeat for Abdulrahman. He escaped only with the help of four Ajman horsemen, who carried him back to safety in Al-Ahsa. Ibrahim bin Muhanna was less fortunate: he was captured near a palm grove outside Huraymila and executed by Ibn Rashid's men Aftermath: The End of the Second Saudi State

The consequences of the battles of Al-Mulaydah and Huraymila were profound. Imam Abdulrahman fled Riyadh once more, this time seeking refuge in the lands of Al-Murra and the Ajman before moving on to Qatar, and finally securing safe haven for his family in Bahrain under the protection of Sheikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa. Eventually, the Al Saud relocated to Kuwait, where they remained in exile for a decade In Riyadh, Muhammad bin Rashid demolished its walls, leveled the palaces of Abdullah bin Faisal and his father Faisal, and installed Muhammad bin Faisal as governor under Rashidi authority. From his base in Hail, Ibn Rashid now commanded all of Najd and central Arabia, both its Bedouin tribes and settled towns The Battle of Al-Mulaydah thus marked the decisive end of the Second Saudi State and the beginning of Rashidi supremacy in Najd

Battle of Riyadh and the Establishment of the Saudis in najd

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Second Saudi State in the late nineteenth century, the Al Saud family found themselves driven from their ancestral capital of Riyadh by their rivals, the Al Rashid family of Ha'il. By late 1901, the exiled Saudis had taken refuge in Kuwait, where they were received by Mubarak Al-Sabah the ruler of the emirate. Among them was a young and determined leader, Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud, later known as Ibn Saud, whose ambition was to restore his family's dominion over Najd

While in Kuwait, Ibn Saud carefully observed the political landscape of Arabia. The Al Rashid emirate dominated central Arabia, yet their control over outlying regions such as Riyadh was fragile and deeply resented by many of its inhabitants. Ibn Saud, fully aware of this discontent, began to plan a daring operation to reclaim his birthplace. He appealed to Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, requesting men, horses, and provisions to mount a small but decisive expedition against the Rashidis. The Kuwaiti ruler, himself entangled in long-standing hostilities with the Rashid dynasty, recognized the strategic advantage of supporting the Al Saud cause and provided Ibn Saud with limited but vital aid arms, ammunition, and a handful of loyal companions. Before setting out, Ibn Saud famously proclaimed, "Judgment belongs to God, and then to Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman bin Saud." His words captured both his faith and his sense of destiny, as he prepared to stake everything on a single, audacious strike In January 1902, Ibn Saud led a small group of fewer than forty men across the harsh desert toward Riyadh, guided by secrecy and speed. Upon arrival, they concealed themselves near the Masmak Fortress, the stronghold of Ajlan bin Mohammed, the Rashidi-appointed governor of the city. At dawn, as the call to prayer echoed across Riyadh, Ibn Saud and his followers launched a sudden assault on the fortress. After a brief but fierce struggle within its narrow corridors, Ibn Saud personally confronted Ibn Ajlan and struck him down. Emerging from the fortress, he held the severed head of his foe aloft and cast it before the gathered townspeople, proclaiming the return of Al Saud rule The fall of Riyadh was more than a local victory it was a symbolic act that reignited the fortunes of the Al Saud dynasty. Ibn Saud's triumph marked the beginning of a long campaign of conquest and unification that would unfold over the next three decades. From this bold restoration of Riyadh in 1902 would rise the Third Saudi State, the nucleus of what would eventually become the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

First Saudi–Rashidi War (1903–1907)

The Saudi–Rashidi War of 1903–1907, often referred to by historians as the First Saudi–Rashidi War or the Battles over al-Qassim, was the first major conflict fought by the emerging Emirate of Riyadh under Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud (Ibn Saud) against the Emirate of Ha'il (Jabal Shammar), ruled by the Rashidi dynasty. This war represented not only a struggle for territorial dominance in central Arabia but also a deeper contest for legitimacy and survival between two rival Arabian powers the resurgent Saudis and the pro-Ottoman Rashidis, who were backed by imperial authority and military resources.

Following his dramatic recapture of Riyadh in 1902, Ibn Saud quickly set out to expand his authority across Najd. His immediate objective was the fertile and strategically vital region of al-Qassim, long regarded as the heart of central Arabia and a key source of

agricultural wealth and trade. Control over al-Qassim meant control over the routes linking Najd to the Hijaz and to the northern deserts a reality that neither the Saudis nor the Rashidis could afford to ignore The Ottoman Empire, seeking to preserve its influence in Arabia through its client, the Rashidi emir Abdulaziz bin Mit'ab Al Rashid, provided significant support to Ha'il. Ottoman officers assisted in the organization of Rashidi defenses, and eight battalions of Ottoman infantry were stationed in northern Najd to reinforce their allies. In contrast, Ibn Saud's forces were composed largely of tribal levies, volunteers, and loyalists from Riyadh and its environs, united by faith and loyalty rather than by centralized military command.

The first major clash came at the Battle of Unaizah (March 1904) Ibn Saud launched a swift campaign into al-Qassim, taking the Rashidis by surprise. His disciplined forces stormed the town of Unaizah (Anaiza) and captured it after fierce fighting. Despite being heavily outnumbered, the Saudis inflicted severe losses around 370 Rashidi troops killed while suffering only two casualties of their own. The victory solidified Ibn Saud's control over much of the al-Qassim region and demonstrated his emerging military genius and ability to inspire his followers through both strategy and charisma However, the war was far from over. The Rashidis, angered by their defeat, regrouped with fresh Ottoman reinforcements and launched counteroffensives throughout 1904 and 1905. This led to a series of hard-fought engagements, including the Battle of al-Bukayriyah and the Battle of al-Shinanah, both of which turned into grueling tests of endurance under the harsh Najdi sun. Although these battles were often indecisive, they underscored the Saudis' growing confidence and the declining prestige of the Rashidi emirate, which increasingly relied on Ottoman support for its survival The conflict reached its climax with the Battle of Rawdat Muhanna (1906), one of the most famous encounters of the war. There, Ibn Saud's forces met the Rashidis in a decisive engagement that ended with the death of Emir Abdulaziz bin Mit'ab Al Rashid, the powerful ruler of Jabal Shammar. His fall marked a turning point in Najdi history the long Rashidi dominance that had overshadowed the Al Saud since the fall of the Second Saudi State was finally broken Yet, hostilities did not completely cease. Skirmishes and retaliatory raids continued, culminating in the Battle of al-Tarafiyah (1907), where remnants of Rashidi resistance attempted to halt Ibn Saud's advance. Though the Rashidis fought valiantly, their losses and internal instability left them weakened, while Ibn Saud's forces consolidated their hold over al-Qassim and central Arabia By the end of 1907, Ibn Saud had emerged as the undisputed master of Najd, having defeated both local rivals and Ottoman proxies

Conquest of al-Hasa

By the early 1910s, Ibn Saud, ruler of the Emirate of Riyadh, had consolidated his power over much of Najd, defeating his Rashidi rivals and expanding his influence across central Arabia. Yet one province remained beyond his control Al-Ahsa, the rich and fertile eastern coastal region that bordered the Persian Gulf. Under Ottoman administration since the mid-nineteenth century, Al-Ahsa was of great strategic value, serving as the Empire's last foothold in eastern Arabia and the key to the Gulf trade routes The Ottomans, aware of Ibn Saud's growing strength, regarded him with suspicion. Reports reached Jamal Pasha, the powerful Ottoman governor of Baghdad,

that Ibn Saud had gathered a large army between Riyadh and Kuwait, assembling men, horses, and supplies near the wells and pastures of the desert frontier. Fearing a rebellion or expansionist move, Jamal Pasha sent a stern message to Riyadh, threatening to dispatch two battalions to march across Najd and subdue the rising emir. Ibn Saud's reply was characteristically bold. He declared that he would "make Jamal Pasha's task easier by shortening the distance his troops would have to march before meeting him," a response that reflected his confidence and readiness for confrontation Soon after, Nadim Bey, the Ottoman Mutasarrif (governor) of Al-Ahsa, sent an envoy to Riyadh under the pretext of diplomacy, hoping to discern Ibn Saud's true intentions. The Najdi ruler feigned indifference claiming that his forces were merely preparing to raid a rebellious tribe near Kuwait. Meanwhile, however, he quietly set his plan in motion. Ibn Saud dispatched trusted agents to Hofuf (Hufuf) to gather intelligence on the strength and disposition of the Ottoman garrison, which numbered roughly 1,200 men, and to make contact with the local population many of whom were sympathetic to his cause due to resentment of Ottoman rule.

At the same time Ibn Saud ordered large quantities of rice and dates to be purchased and transported to his camps, under the guise of provisioning for tribal raids. In reality, these supplies were intended to sustain his army for a major military operation. When all preparations were complete, he advanced toward Al-Ahsa in secrecy, timing his approach to coincide with the cover of night According to a report from the Russian Consulate in Basra, the assault on Hofuf began suddenly and with remarkable precision. The Najdis, well-prepared and disciplined, carried with them palm-trunk battering rams, ropes, and ladders, which they had fashioned in advance. Under the darkness of night, they stormed the city's defenses and quickly overwhelmed the outer positions. Within hours, Hofuf fell into Saudi hands, as did the Kut citadel, with the exception of the Ibrahim Mosque, a fortified structure where Nadim Bey and a portion of his garrison made their last stand Ibn Saud ordered his men to surround the mosque and sent a message inside warning that the building had been mined with explosives and would be stormed unless the defenders surrendered. Realizing the futility of resistance, the Mutasarrif agreed to lay down his arms. The Ottoman troops were treated honorably; under the supervision of Ahmad ibn Sunayyan, a relative of Ibn Saud, they were escorted safely out of Hofuf and sent to Bahrain by sea In the aftermath of the conquest, Ibn Saud faced the delicate task of securing local allegiance. The Shi'a religious leaders of Al-Ahsa sought assurances of safety and freedom of worship in exchange for their recognition of his political authority. Ibn Saud granted these terms, issuing guarantees of leniency and religious tolerance an act that helped him consolidate control over the province without prolonged resistance The Ottoman authorities, stunned by the sudden loss of Al-Ahsa, were quick to acknowledge reality. To avoid a larger confrontation in the midst of growing instability across the empire, they formally recognized Ibn Saud's rule over Al-Ahsa and Najd, thereby legitimizing his authority in the eyes of neighboring powers However, the aftermath of the conquest did not pass without incident. In Bahrain, the British political authorities expressed disapproval at the Ottoman surrender, reproaching the defeated soldiers and warning them of the consequences of Ottoman displeasure. They encouraged the Turks to reoccupy Al-Ahsa, promising them logistical assistance and naval transport. Deceived by these assurances, the Ottoman soldiers hired ships and set sail back toward al-Uqair, hoping to regain their lost positions. When they landed, however, they were met not by allies but by a Saudi detachment under Bin Nader, who immediately engaged them in fierce combat. The skirmish resulted in numerous Ottoman casualties and the capture of thirty soldiers.

Upon receiving the news in Hofuf, Ibn Saud personally rode to al-Uqair. Demonstrating both firmness and magnanimity, he ordered the prisoners released and sent back to Bahrain. He also addressed sharp letters to the ruler of Bahrain and the British political agent, condemning their deceitful interference. The British replied evasively, insisting that the soldiers had merely departed Bahrain for Basra and that they bore no responsibility for their actions.
With the conquest of Al-Ahsa in 1913, Ibn Saud had achieved one of his most significant early triumphs. The annexation of this vital province not only extended his realm to the shores of the Persian Gulf but also signaled the final eclipse of Ottoman authority in eastern Arabia

Second Saudi-Rashidi War

Following the First Saudi–Rashidi War, the Emirate of Nejd, under Abdulaziz ibn Saud, consolidated its control over the Qassim region and the territories to its south, establishing itself as the dominant power in central Arabia. During this period, both Nejd and the Emirate of Jabal Shammar (ruled by the Al Rashid dynasty) maintained intricate ties with the Ottoman Empire The Rashidis of Jabal Shammar were more consistent allies of the Ottomans, receiving arms and material support. Nejd, though at times formally acknowledging Ottoman suzerainty Ibn Saud himself was appointed qaimmaqam (district governor) of southern Nejd by the Ottomans in 1905 functioned with broad autonomy, particularly after defeating the combined Rashidi–Ottoman forces and securing the Ottoman withdrawal from Qassim in 1906 In 1913, taking advantage of Ottoman preoccupation with conflicts in Libya and the Balkans, Ibn Saud captured the Al-Hasa region from its Ottoman garrison. The weakened empire was compelled to recognize this fait accompli, further consolidating Ibn Saud's authority At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the Emirate of Nejd and Hasa, under Ibn Saud, declared neutrality. Jabal Shammar initially did the same, but soon became an active ally of the Ottoman Empire and the Central Powers, conducting operations against Allied interests with Ottoman support Kuwait, a British protectorate since the Anglo-Kuwaiti Agreement of 1899, likewise declared neutrality. However, following the Ottoman entry into the war, Britain formally declared Kuwait an independent shaikhdom under its protection in November 1914, thereby drawing it firmly into the Allied camp. British interest in Nejd grew in parallel with the growing hostility of Jabal Shammar. Captain William Shakespear, a political officer and explorer, had established close ties with Ibn Saud from 1910 and served as his advisor until his death in 1915 During the war, Britain sought to formalize an alliance with Ibn Saud to counter the Rashidi threat. These negotiations culminated in the Treaty of Darin in December 1915, under which Britain recognized Ibn Saud's authority over Nejd and Hasa, effectively placing the emirate under British protection. In return, Ibn Saud pledged to oppose Ottoman-aligned forces, particularly Jabal Shammar, in exchange for financial and military assistance Meanwhile, the Ottomans attempted to win Ibn Saud to their side, appealing to pan-Islamic sentiment and offering incentives to maintain Arab loyalty to the empire On 24 January 1915, Nejd and Jabal Shammar clashed at Jarrab. Ibn Saud's cavalry initially outperformed their Rashidi counterparts, but the infantry of Jabal Shammar ultimately prevailed. The sudden withdrawal of the Ajman tribe, allies of Ibn Saud, contributed to his defeat, the loss of his camp, and the outbreak of the Ajman

revolt. During the battle, Captain William Shakespear was killed, a blow that strained British confidence in Ibn Saud. His death also influenced British strategy in Arabia, leading many officials to give greater support to Sharif Hussein of Mecca, whose Arab Revolt soon became central to British war policy. At the beginning of 1915, the Ottoman Empire delivered around 10,000 rifles and ammunition to Jabal Shammar. After the Treaty of Darin, Britain began sending monthly stipends to Ibn Saud, later increasing the annual subsidy to £60,000 in 1917. Arms shipments also reached Nejd, including a significant consignment in June 1916.
Thus, Arabia became a theatre of competing Ottoman and British influence, with Nejd and Jabal Shammar serving as their respective clients
The aftermath of Jarrab was dominated by Ibn Saud's conflict with the Ajman tribe, whose revolt threatened his authority. The Battle of Kanzan, fought later in 1915, saw Ibn Saud defeated and personally wounded. The conflict prompted British mediation. In November 1916, Sir Percy Cox convened meetings in Al-Aqeer and Kuwait, seeking to reconcile Ibn Saud with the Ajman and coordinate regional policy. Yet the revolt continued to drain Nejd's resources, even as Rashidi raids, often coordinated with Ottoman forces, pressed on Kuwait and Nejd throughout 1916. Jabal Shammar remained a steadfast Ottoman ally. In 1917, its forces launched an attack on the Hejaz, raided along the Hejaz Railway, and supported Ottoman troops during the protracted siege of Medina. These actions heightened British urgency to secure stronger military commitments from Ibn Saud. Following Shakespear's death, Sir Percy Cox became the chief British representative dealing with Ibn Saud. Later, Harry St. John Philby was dispatched in late 1917 to press Ibn Saud for more aggressive action against Jabal Shammar Ibn Saud, however, explained the difficulties of such an undertaking: the mountainous terrain of Jabal Shammar, the formidable defenses of Ha'il, and his limited weaponry made a large-scale offensive unfeasible at that time. In mid-1918, after receiving further British encouragement and support, Ibn Saud launched an offensive with roughly 5,000 troops. By September, his forces approached the outskirts of Ha'il, the Rashidi capital However, the campaign was called off in October, partly due to reports that Sharif Hussein had concluded a peace with Jabal Shammar and partly on British advice, as London preferred to avoid destabilizing the delicate balance of power in Arabia Though the offensive fell short of capturing Ha'il, it brought Ibn Saud significant spoils 1,500 camels, large numbers of sheep, and thousands of cartridges while further weakening Jabal Shammar's strength on the eve of the Ottoman Empire's collapse

Najd-hijazi war

When the First World War erupted in 1914, the Arabian Peninsula found itself caught between competing powers and rising national aspirations. In the heart of Nejd, Emir Abdulaziz ibn Saud then the ruler of Riyadh and the emerging Saudi domain watched cautiously as the global conflict unfolded. His political instinct was to preserve independence amidst the rivalries of the Great Powers. Accordingly, Ibn Saud proposed a neutral Arab stance to his regional counterparts Sharif Husayn ibn Ali of Hejaz, Mubarak Al-Sabah of Kuwait, and Muhammad ibn Talal Al-Rashid of Jabal Shammar. His idea was to avoid entanglement in European wars and instead focus on Arab self-determination and stability However, no consensus emerged. Sharif Husayn, whose ambitions extended far beyond the Hijaz, rejected Ibn Saud's proposal and soon aligned

himself with the British, initiating the Arab Revolt in 1916. By declaring himself "King of the Arabs Husayn angered Ibn Saud, who viewed the proclamation as an attempt to usurp his influence in the central and eastern regions of Arabia. Relations between Riyadh and Mecca deteriorated rapidly, especially as disputes arose over the strategically important oasis of al-Khurma, located on the frontier between Nejd and the Hejaz.

For nearly two years, Ibn Saud maintained a position of cautious neutrality, focusing his energies on consolidating power in Nejd and al-Hasa. But as the war reached its latter stages, the geopolitical balance began to shift. The British, eager to counter Ottoman influence, saw Ibn Saud as a valuable ally against the pro-Ottoman Emirate of Ha'il. By late 1917, a British mission under Colonel R. E. Hamilton arrived in Riyadh, offering Ibn Saud substantial support and modern weaponry in exchange for continued hostility toward the Rashidis of Jabal Shammar. Although Ibn Saud's enmity with Ha'il predated the war stemming from the capture of Riyadh in the late 19th century British patronage strengthened his position.

Nevertheless, changing circumstances in the Levant reduced the immediate value of Saudi assistance. British forces were advancing in Palestine, while the Hashemites had already established their revolt in the western Arabian theater. This led to a temporary cooling of Saudi-British coordination. In 1918, despite organizing an army of approximately 5,000 men, Ibn Saud received orders from London to suspend operations against Ha'il Meanwhile, the al-Khurma dispute escalated sharply. The oasis's emir, Khalid ibn Mansur ibn Luwai, defected from Hashemite authority to Ibn Saud's allegiance. Sharif Husayn viewed this as an act of rebellion and dispatched a punitive expedition to restore control. Ibn Saud responded swiftly, sending his Ikhwan forces devout and formidable Wahhabi fighters who decisively defeated the Hashemite detachment in mid-1918. This clash marked the first open confrontation between the two powers and set the stage for larger conflict After the war's end in late 1918, Britain turned its attention to postwar settlements and showed little concern for the growing Saudi-Hashemite tension. Sharif Husayn, emboldened by his wartime prestige, sought to reassert control over al-Khurma. His actions, however, transformed what had been a regional political rivalry into a sectarian and ideological conflict between the Hashemite custodians of Mecca and the Wahhabi reformist power of Nejd. Despite warnings from local leaders, Husayn ordered another offensive, assuming that British favor and the weakness of the Najdis would guarantee a swift victory.

In May 1919, a Hashemite army under Prince Abdallah ibn Husayn advanced toward Turaba, another key oasis roughly 80 miles from al-Khurma The Hashemite troops occupied and plundered the settlement on May 21 prompting Ibn Saud to issue a stern ultimatum: any further advance would mean war. Undeterred Abdallah's army encamped near Turaba, unaware of the impending disaster On the night of May 25–26, 1919, a disciplined Ikhwan force commanded by Sultan bin Bajad, Hamud ibn Umar and Khalid ibn Luwai launched a surprise assault on the Hashemite camp The result was catastrophic for the Hejazi forces. Within hours, the Hashemite army was shattered hundreds were slain, and the rest fled in disarray. Prince Abdallah himself narrowly escaped death, returning to Mecca humiliated The Battle of Turaba proved to be a turning point in the Saudi Hashemite conflict. It shattered Sharif Husayn's military prestige and emboldened Ibn Saud to consider a full-scale conquest of the Hejaz. By July 1919, Ibn Saud personally arrived in Turaba with an army of 10,000 men, poised to march westward. However the British alarmed by the prospect of war between two of their Arab alliesintervened. On July 4, they issued a formal ultimatum to Ibn Saud,

demanding that he halt his advance and withdraw to Nejd Although Ibn Saud complied, unwilling to jeopardize his growing alliance with Britain, the battle had already altered the political landscape. The Ikhwan's victory at Turaba demonstrated the rising might of Nejd and foreshadowed the eventual downfall of the Hashemite Kingdom of Hejaz a few years later. The war of Turaba thus stands not merely as a localized engagement, but as a decisive prelude to the Saudi unification of Arabia in the years that followed

Kuwait-najd war

In 1913, Emir Abdulaziz Ibn Saud of Riyadh captured the Sanjak of al-Hasa from the Ottoman Empire, dramatically expanding his domain to the shores of the Persian Gulf. This placed his new realm directly adjacent to the Emirate of Kuwait, ruled by the Al Sabah. The geopolitical situation was complicated by the Anglo–Ottoman Convention of 1913, which defined Kuwait's southern border at Manifa, roughly 200 kilometers south of Kuwait City. Yet Ibn Saud rejected the arrangement, since the Ottomans had already lost control of al-Hasa, and he considered the convention illegitimate in relation to his state The uneasy frontier soon became a flashpoint. In 1919, Sheikh Salim al-Mubarak Al-Sabah attempted to establish a new commercial city in southern Kuwait to strengthen his emirate's position. Ibn Saud strongly opposed the project, viewing it as an encroachment near his expanding Najdi domain. The crisis escalated diplomatically, but British officials intervened, urging Salim to abandon the settlement scheme to avoid provoking Ibn Saud further The tension soon erupted into open conflict. In the spring of 1920, a large force of Ikhwan warriors, around 2,000 strong, advanced into southern Kuwait with the aim of constructing a fortified settlement to assert Najdi authority. Confronting them were only about 100 Kuwaiti cavalry and 200 infantrymen, hastily assembled under Sheikh Salim's command.

The clash became known as the Battle of Hamdh, lasting for six days of skirmishes and exchanges of fire. Though exact casualty figures remain unknown, losses were described as heavy on both sides. In the end, the Ikhwan prevailed, securing a tactical victory and momentum for a wider assault on Kuwait itself The Ikhwan victory at Hamdh directly set the stage for the more decisive Battle of Jahra later that same year. A force of 3,000–4,000 Ikhwan fighters, led by the formidable Faisal al-Duwaish, marched on the fortified town of al-Jahra, where the Kuwaitis had withdrawn. Defended by approximately 1,500 men, the Red Fort at Jahra became the focal point of a dramatic siege.

The fort's defenders were placed under severe pressure, with the Ikhwan surrounding the position and threatening to overwhelm it. Contemporary observers noted that, had Jahra fallen, Kuwait's independence might have ended altogether, with the emirate likely absorbed into the emerging Saudi realm While the defenders managed to temporarily repulse Ikhwan assaults, the situation remained dire. Negotiations began between Sheikh Salim and Faisal al-Duwaish, during which al-Duwaish threatened renewed attacks unless the Kuwaitis surrendered outright. Alarmed, the Kuwaiti merchant elite urged Salim to appeal for British assistance The call for aid was answered swiftly. Britain dispatched warships and aircraft to Kuwait's defense. The appearance of superior military technology particularly the aerial presence of British planes forced the Ikhwan to halt their advance. The siege of Jahra was lifted, and Kuwait's independence was preserved, though only through foreign intervention Following the failure to capture Jahra Ikhwan presented Sheikh Salim with a set of

radical demands like The expulsion of the Shi'a population from Kuwait and The enforcement of Ikhwan doctrine and The public denunciation of the Ottomans as heretics The closure of the American missionary hospital in Kuwait These demands reflected the uncompromising religious and social program of the Ikhwan, which clashed sharply with Kuwait's more pluralistic and tolerant traditions. As the British traveler William Palgrave had earlier observed, Kuwait was distinguished within the Gulf for its religious openness, a feature that stood in stark contrast to the Ikhwan's vision of reform The 1922 Treaty of Uqair defined Kuwait's border with the Saudis and also established the Saudi-Kuwaiti neutral zone, an area of about 5,180 km^2 adjoining Kuwait's southern border Kuwait loses more than two thirds of its territory as a result of the agreement The sharpened conflict between Kuwait and Najd led to the death of hundreds of Kuwaitis Following the Kuwait–Najd War, Ibn Saud imposed a trade blockade against Kuwait for 14 years from 1923 until 1937 The goal of the Saudi economic and military aggression against Kuwait was to annex as much of Kuwait's territory as possible After the Uqair conference, Kuwait was still subjected to a Saudi economic blockade and intermittent Saudi raids

Conquest of Ha'il

Saudi forces advanced on Ha'il with the support of their powerful tribal allies, the Ikhwan, and with limited British military assistance in terms of arms and supplies. Facing them was the last Rashidi emir, Muhammad bin Talal Al Rashid, who made a final stand in defense of his capital After a determined resistance, Ha'il fell on 2 November 1921when Emir Muhammad surrendered. The capture of Ha'il brought an end to the independent existence of the Emirate of Jabal Shammar, which was incorporated into the growing Saudi state Following the conquest, Emir Muhammad bin Talal Al Rashid was taken into custody. According to multiple accounts, Abdulaziz compelled Muhammad to divorce his wife, Noura bint Sibhan, whom Abdulaziz then married. Their union was short-lived, ending in divorce. Abdulaziz later married Muhammad's daughter Jawaher bint Muhammad bin Talal further intertwining the dynastic lines Naming and Mislabeling The Rashidi state with its capital at Ha'il, was often referred to as the Emirate of Ha'il, though its formal title remained the Emirate of Jabal Shammar The 1921 conquest is sometimes mistakenly referred to as the Second Saudi–Rashidi War, though it was in fact the third and final conflict between the two houses

Saudi Conquest Of hijaz

The final confrontation between the Emirate of Nejd and the Hashemite Kingdom of Hejaz emerged from what seemed, at first, a relatively minor provocation: the denial of pilgrimage access to Najdi pilgrims traveling to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina Yet this act infused with deep political and religious symbolism provided Abdulaziz ibn Saud, the ruler of Nejd, with a pretext to resume hostilities and bring to an end the long-standing Hashemite dominance over the western Arabian lands By August 1924, the political landscape of Arabia had shifted decisively. The Hashemite Kingdom of Hejaz, once bolstered by British gold and wartime prestige, stood increasingly isolated. In contrast, Ibn Saud's domain in Nejd had grown into a disciplined, expanding state,

strengthened by the Ikhwan a confederation of devout tribal warriors united under Wahhabi doctrine and absolute loyalty to Ibn Saud. On 29 August 1924, Ibn Saud launched his long-prepared campaign into the Hejaz. His forces advanced westward toward the strategic city of Taif, the gateway to Mecca. The city fell swiftly and with little resistance, as local defenders either fled or surrendered. The fall of Taif opened the road to Mecca and sent shockwaves through the Hashemite ranks. King Husayn ibn Ali, ruler of the Hejaz and self-proclaimed "King of the Arabs," appealed desperately for foreign assistance. His pleas to the British authorities were denied on the grounds that London would not interfere in what it termed a "religious dispute" between Muslim factions. Even Husayn's son, Abdullah of Transjordan, refused to send aid, constrained by his dependence on British support and his limited resources.

Realizing his precarious position, Husayn abandoned Mecca and fled to the coastal stronghold of Jeddah, leaving the holy city virtually undefended. On 13 October 1924, the Saudi forces and the Ikhwan entered Mecca without resistance. The fall of the city marked a decisive moment in Arabian history: for the first time since the 10th century, the holy sanctuary passed into the hands of a central Arabian power Only three days later, on 16 October 1924, King Husayn formally abdicated the throne of the Hejaz in favor of his son Ali ibn Husayn, and went into permanent exile. His departure symbolized not only the collapse of Hashemite rule in western Arabia but also the waning of the old order of Ottoman-era Arab monarchs Shortly afterward, on 29 October 1924, an Islamic Conference convened in Riyadh, where leading religious scholars and tribal representatives proclaimed recognition of Ibn Saud's authority over Mecca and the holy sites This act gave the Saudi conquest both religious legitimacy and broad Islamic endorsement, consolidating Ibn Saud's position as guardian of the Two Holy Mosques By the end of that year, the Hashemites' power had been reduced to the port cities of Jeddah and Yanbu, and to Medina, the second holy city. The rapid collapse of the Hashemite regime was largely attributed to the cessation of British subsidies that had once secured the loyalty of the Hejazi Bedouin tribes. Bereft of financial support and deeply unpopular among the tribes and merchants, Husayn's kingdom disintegrated with remarkable speed Nevertheless, resistance persisted in the coastal cities. The merchants of Jeddah, Medina, and Yanbu, wary of the strict Wahhabi rule of Nejd, pooled their wealth to finance a makeshift defense. They viewed Ibn Saud and his Ikhwan as austere zealots from the interior and were determined to resist occupation. For months, these port cities held out, sustained by limited supplies and British diplomatic mediation. By late 1925, however, the Saudi advance had become irresistible. A blockade of Jeddah cut off the city's lifeline to the Red Sea. Medina capitulated on 9 December 1925, followed by Yanbu twelve days later. In January 1926, after negotiations between King Ali, the British consul, and Ibn Saud's envoys, Jeddah formally surrendered. On 8 January 1926, the gates of the last Hashemite stronghold opened, and Saudi troops entered the city in triumph With this victory, Abdulaziz ibn Saud assumed the title of King of the Hejaz, uniting the holy cities of Mecca and Medina with his dominion in Nejd. The two realms were consolidated under the new title "The Kingdom of Nejd and Hejaz marking a pivotal step toward the formation of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 The aftermath was both political and dynastic. Husayn ibn Ali, stripped of his throne, attempted to regroup in Aqaba, only to be pressured into exile by the British, who sent him to Cyprus. His son Ali, who had briefly inherited the collapsing throne, fled to Iraq after the fall of Jeddah, joining his Hashemite relatives who had already established themselves as monarchs in Transjordan and Iraq under British tutelage Thus ended the Hashemite Kingdom of the Hejaz, and with it, the

centuries-long dominance of the western Arabian elite over the sacred heart of Islam. In its place rose a new order one rooted in the austere faith, political discipline, and military vigor of Nejd under the leadership of King Abdulaziz Al Saud, whose unification of Arabia would redefine the political map of the Middle East

ikhwan raids on Transjordan

Following the defeat of the Hashemites in the Nejd–Hejaz War of 1919 and the subsequent failure of their ambitions in Syria, the British Empire sought to consolidate its influence over Transjordan and Iraq by securing them as stable Hashemite monarchies. The establishment of these kingdoms was not merely political it was a matter of imperial strategy, ensuring British control over the route between Egypt, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf. To achieve this, the British invested heavily in the defense and organization of Transjordan, supporting Emir Abdullah I both militarily and administratively British officers and advisors played a decisive role in quelling local unrest. With their assistance, Abdullah suppressed the Kura Rebellion of 1921 and later crushed the Sultan Adwan uprising of 1923. These victories secured his internal position, yet the British and the Hashemite emir soon faced a new and far greater danger from beyond their eastern frontier From the deserts of Nejd, the Ikhwan movement a zealous Wahhabi tribal militia serving under King Abdulaziz ibn Saud had begun to expand its reach beyond Arabia. The Ikhwan, motivated by religious fervor and loyal to their king's mission of unifying the Arabian Peninsula under Wahhabi rule, swept northwards and westwards during 1922, reaching the unmarked and poorly defended borders of Transjordan. The movement's cross-tribal composition and uncompromising ideology posed a serious military threat. The raids united the otherwise fractious Transjordanian tribes and compelled Emir Abdullah's government to cooperate closely with both the British military and local tribal forces The first major incursion occurred in mid-1922 when a contingent of Ikhwan tribesmen descended upon two villages belonging to the Bani Sakhr tribe, roughly twelve miles south of Amman. The attack was brutal and swift; the Ikhwan massacred scores of inhabitants looted property, and burned encampments The Hadid tribe, joined by surviving members of the Bani Sakhr, rallied quickly and engaged the invaders in a two-day battle on the outskirts of the plateau. Though outnumbered the Transjordanian tribes fought with determination and managed to repel the raiders, marking an early Indecisive victory Only as the Ikhwan began to retreat did British armored cars and Royal Air Force aircraft arrive, harassing the fleeing warriors with machine-gun fire from above In early 1923, emboldened by growing numbers and encouraged by their success in the Arabian frontier regions, a new Ikhwan force struck at Al-Jafr a remote oasis settlement southeast of Ma'an The Wahhabi contingent drawn largely from the Mutair and Otaiba tribes, overwhelmed the small local garrison. In a victory they looted supplies and livestock and withdrew before British aircraft could intercept them By August 1924, the conflict had escalated into a larger confrontation. A formidable Ikhwan army of roughly 4,500 men marched more than 1,600 kilometers from central Arabia to strike deep into Transjordanian territory. Their objective was to punish the Bani Sakhr for continued resistance and to project Ibn Saud's authority into the northern desert. Fifteen kilometers south of Amman, the Ikhwan encountered stiff opposition. This time, however, the Royal Air Force intervened swiftly. British biplanes swooped down over

the desert, bombing and strafing the Wahhabi formations. The Ikhwan suffered heavy casualties, with some 500 killed, while the attacked villages counted over 130 dead. The ferocity of the raid shocked the Transjordanian populace and convinced both the British and Abdullah that the threat from Nejd could no longer be underestimated Later that same year, a smaller but tactically significant encounter took place near Mudawwara, close to the old Hejaz railway line. A contingent of Ikhwan warriors ambushed a Transjordanian patrol escorting supplies to a desert fort. Despite fierce resistance, the Wahhabi raiders emerged victorious, capturing arms, camels, and several prisoners before vanishing back into the sands. The engagement demonstrated the Ikhwan's mastery of guerrilla tactics and their capacity to exploit the vast open terrain of northern Arabia to their advantage In response to repeated incursions, Emir Abdullah ordered a counter-operation in late 1924. Reinforced by British advisors and tribal levies, Transjordanian forces confronted a gathering of Ikhwan fighters near Qa' al-Balqa, west of Amman. After a fierce exchange, the Wahhabi advance was broken, and the survivors were forced to retreat back toward Wadi Sirhan

ikhwan raids on Iraq

Faisal al-Dawish launched a series of audacious incursions into southern Iraq. These raids targeted towns and villages near the desert frontier Dawish led a formidable Ikhwan contingent in a sudden assault south of Nasiriyah. The attack resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Iraqi defenders and villagers, leaving the area devastated. Despite limited British intervention, the Ikhwan withdrew safely that alarmed Baghdad. In one of the most daring cross-border strikes Ikhwan horsemen attacked the Iraqi border police post of al-Busayyah. The defenders resisted fiercely, but the outpost fell after intense fighting, leaving around twenty Iraqis dead. Among the slain was Commander Jassim al-Sa'dawi, the district officer in charge, whose death shocked the Iraqi administration and fueled public anger Another Ikhwan force stormed the village of Jaryshan, near Basra, killing over fifty men and looting livestock and property before retreating into the desert. The raid exposed the weakness of Iraq's southern defenses and drew British criticism of the kingdom's inability to control its borders clash occurred near the desert town of al-Salman, where the Ikhwan ambushed an Iraqi cavalry patrol, defeating them decisively and capturing several officers. The skirmish demonstrated the Ikhwan's superior mobility and desert warfare tactics British forces began to pursue the Ikhwan which led to clashes such as the near Al-Qusayr in 1924 when the Iraqi Al-Dhafir tribe won over the Ikhwan and Additional forts constructed and occupied by Iraqi troops RAF planes started bombing NajdIn retaliation against the Ikhwan. In another confrontation near the Kuwaiti frontier, the Ikhwan overpowered an Iraqi tribal militia attempting to defend caravan routes allowed the Ikhwan to seize hundreds of camels and assert control over the trade lines for several weeks before British aircraft intervened

Ikhwan revolt

Following the conquest of the Hejaz in 1925 and the consolidation of Ibn Saud's authority across Arabia, tensions began to grow between the central government in Riyadh and the Ikhwan the puritanical tribal militia that had once served as the vanguard of Saudi expansion. Many of the Ikhwan leaders, particularly the fierce Mutair, Ajman, and Otaibah tribes, believed that their mission of spreading Wahhabism through jihad was far from complete. They resented Ibn Saud's diplomatic restraint toward neighboring territories and his increasing accommodation with Britain. While Ibn Saud sought to stabilize his newly unified kingdom and secure international recognition, the Ikhwan viewed the cessation of expansion into Iraq, Transjordan, and Kuwait as a betrayal of the Wahhabi cause The tribesmen had already tested their limits during the Kuwait–Najd Border War (1921) and through successive raids on Transjordan (1922–1924), both of which ended with heavy casualties due to British air intervention. Their frustration deepened when Ibn Saud prohibited further incursions into British protectorates, warning that such actions would provoke a disastrous confrontation with London. Yet the Ikhwan, convinced that Ibn Saud had strayed from divine duty, began to openly defy his commands. The first signs of open rebellion emerged in November 1927, when a force of Ikhwan tribesmen mostly Mutair under Faisal al-Dawish launched a major raid into southern Iraq. They clashed with Iraqi troops near al-Busayyah, where around twenty men were killed on both sides. The establishment of a new Iraqi police fort at Busayyah, symbolizing British encroachment, was seen by the Ikhwan as a direct provocation. In January 1928, Ikhwan raiders struck again, this time targeting Kuwait, where they looted livestock and attacked border settlements. Although the raids were brutal and destructive, the British Royal Air Force (RAF) retaliated swiftly, bombing the retreating Ikhwan and inflicting heavy losses In an effort to contain the unrest, Ibn Saud convened a massive tribal and religious assembly known as al-Jamʿiyyah al-ʿUmūmiyyah (the General Assembly or Riyadh Conference) in November 1928. More than 800 delegates attended, including leading Ikhwan sheikhs, religious scholars, and notables from across the kingdom. Ibn Saud used the occasion to reaffirm his legitimacy, denounce unauthorized raids, and warn against defiance. Despite his attempts at reconciliation, many Ikhwan leaders refused to submit, accusing him of abandoning jihad for diplomacy By December 1928, the situation had escalated into a full-scale rebellion. The Ikhwan, inflamed by religious zeal and distrust of Ibn Saud's growing bureaucracy, declared open war against his authority. The rebels' hostility intensified after a notorious incident in January 1929, when an Ikhwan raiding party in Kuwait killed an American missionary, Dr. Bilkert, and attacked the convoy of Charles Crane, a visiting philanthropist. This international outrage prompted Britain to increase its military presence in Kuwait and extend RAF operations along the Saudi border. Ibn Saud, realizing that diplomacy could no longer contain the insurrection, began organizing his loyalist army composed of regular troops, tribal levies, and a modernized artillery corps to confront his former allies The decisive engagement came on 31 March 1929, near al-Sabila, north of al-Artawiyah. The confrontation, later remembered as the Battle of Sabilla, marked the end of the traditional era of desert warfare. The Ikhwan, numbering several thousand camel-mounted fighters, charged fearlessly against Ibn Saud's better-equipped forces, which included mechanized units and machine guns. The battle lasted barely an hour; the rebels' courage was no match for the King's superior firepower. When the dust settled, some 500 Ikhwan tribesmen

lay dead, compared to roughly 200 casualties among Ibn Saud's men. Most of the Ikhwan leadership, including prominent commanders, were killed or captured in the melee. Sabilla was not only a victory for Ibn Saud but also a decisive turning point in Arabian history the final triumph of centralized authority over the autonomous tribal militancy that had built his state Although Sabilla shattered the main rebel army, resistance continued in scattered regions. In August 1929, loyalist forces clashed with remaining Ikhwan factions in the Jabal Shammar region, where fierce fighting left more than 1,000 dead on both sides. The remnants of the Mutair and Otaibah tribes regrouped temporarily, launching sporadic attacks such as the raid on the ʿAwāzim tribe on 5 October 1929, which killed around 250 individuals. These final acts of defiance, however, were swiftly suppressed by Saudi troops and RAF reconnaissance patrols By October 1929, Faisal al-Dawish fled to Kuwait, seeking asylum, while other rebel leaders attempted to negotiate their surrender. The revolt officially ended on 10 January 1930, when the last surviving Ikhwan commanders capitulated to the British and were handed over to Ibn Saud's government The suppression of the Ikhwan Revolt marked a defining moment in the formation of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The defeat of the militant tribal movement allowed Ibn Saud to centralize power and reorganize his military forces under direct royal control. The surviving Ikhwan fighters were either executed, imprisoned, or absorbed into the new Saudi regular army, thus ending their independence Faisal al-Dawish died in prison in Riyadh on 3 October 1931, while Sultan bin Bajad, another key Ikhwan leader, was killed shortly thereafter. Their deaths symbolized the close of the revolutionary chapter that had once forged the Saudi state. Though the Ikhwan Revolt was crushed militarily, its legacy endured in Saudi history as a reminder of the tension between religious idealism and pragmatic statecraft a struggle that defined the early decades of the Saudi realm

the Saudi-Yemeni border skirmish

1931, tensions quietly flared along the undefined frontier separating the Kingdom of Hejaz and Nejd the newly consolidated Saudi realm and the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen, ruled by Imam Yahya Muhammad Hamid al-Din. Though poorly documented and largely overshadowed by greater regional events, the encounter, sometimes referred to as the Saudi–Yemeni Border Skirmish of 1931, marked one of the earliest military frictions between the two emerging Arabian monarchies The primary account of this obscure incident survives through the writings of Harry St. John Philby, a British explorer and close adviser to King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud, who later published a brief but revealing note on the matter in his 1955 work Saudi Arabia (p. 322) Philby's description situates the clash in the frontier zone between Asir and northern Yemen a region historically contested, ethnically intertwined, and strategically significant for both kingdoms According to Philby, the confrontation was sparked by a localized territorial dispute reminiscent of earlier conflicts such as the Battle of al-Khurma, where competing claims and local tribal loyalties blurred the distinction between deliberate invasion and accidental encroachment. Imam Yahya, seeking to assert Yemen's authority over disputed border tribes, ordered small detachments of his troops into regions claimed by both sides. These troops were reportedly encouraged by local elements sympathetic to Zaidi control and wary of the strict Wahhabi administration recently extended over Asir and Najran. The inevitable result was a brief exchange of

fire between Saudi frontier guards and Yemeni forces near the small village of ‘Aru, early in 1931. As Philby himself admitted, the absence of accurate maps or defined border demarcations at the time made it difficult to determine who had initiated hostilities. Nevertheless, he concluded that “the blame lay with the Wahhabi commander, who had unwittingly trespassed into Yemen territory. Though no large-scale battle ensued, the incident reflected deeper structural tensions in Arabian geopolitics. Both the Saudis and the Yemenis were pursuing consolidation the former extending authority southward after the unification of Hejaz and Nejd in 1932, the latter seeking to preserve tribal allegiance along its northern rim. The tribes inhabiting the frontier, such as those of Najran, Asir, and Jizan, often shifted their loyalties between the two rulers depending on religious affinity, taxation, and local autonomy The Correlates of War Project later conducted an inquiry in 2017 into the incident, concluding that while no mention of it appeared in The Times or major British dispatches of 1931, the event was nonetheless credible given Philby’s close proximity to King Ibn Saud and his reputation as a meticulous Arabist and chronicler of the Arabian Peninsula

the Najran Conflict (1932)

The Najran Conflict of 1932 represents one of the lesser-known yet historically significant border clashes between the Kingdom of Hejaz and Nejd (the early Saudi state) and the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen. This confrontation, although poorly documented in both Saudi and Yemeni records, symbolized the growing tension over territorial sovereignty in the southern Arabian frontier during the final stages of King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud’s unification campaigns In the winter of 1931–1932, hostilities broke out following a Yemeni incursion into the oasis of Najran, a strategic settlement located near the frontier between the two kingdoms. According to contemporary accounts, a Yemeni detachment entered the oasis, destroying property belonging to local tribes who were aligned with Ibn Saud, an act that provoked immediate retaliation from Riyadh. The Saudi response was swift and resolute King Abdulaziz dispatched one of his most trusted commanders, Khalid bin Luwai, the chief of Khurma and a veteran of the Ikhwan wars, to lead a counter-expedition Khalid bin Luwai led a formidable Ikhwan force into Najran in the early months of 1932. His campaign was decisive: after a brief but fierce confrontation, Yemeni troops were expelled from Najran, and the oasis was secured under Saudi authority. Philby concludes that “the Najran issue was thus settled for good implying that this event solidified Saudi control over the oasis and ended Yemeni ambitions in the area

The Saudi-Yemeni war (1934)

Tensions had been simmering since the late 1920s, particularly after the Saudi annexation of Asir in 1930, a move which Imam Yahya considered a violation of earlier understandings regarding territorial boundaries. Disputes over Najran and the highlands of Tihamah deepened the rift, and diplomatic efforts repeatedly failed to secure a stable agreement. By early 1934, after years of mutual suspicion and sporadic border incidents, the situation deteriorated into open warfare.

In March 1934, King Ibn Saud, frustrated by Imam Yahya's encroachments, ordered his son and heir, Crown Prince Saud bin Abdulaziz, to re-occupy the townships in the highlands of Tihamah which the Imam of Yemen has seized According to Saudi communiqués issued at the time, the decision followed "exhaustive diplomatic attempts" that had been met with "continued aggression" and the Imam's "policy of oppressing the inhabitants and eradicating all who have not surrendered." On 20 March 1934, Saudi Arabia formally declared war on Yemen, setting the stage for one of the swiftest campaigns in modern Arabian warfare The Saudi advance was rapid and coordinated. Within days, Haradh was occupied (9 April), followed by the fall of its last remaining fort on the 10th. The strategic towns of Hajara and Najran were captured on 7 and 21 April, respectively, while Midi, an important coastal settlement, came under siege. Saudi forces pressed forward through the rugged terrain of the frontier, seizing Aqabat ash-Shatba, Yabad, and the Bab al-Hadid valley, and finally surrounding Baqim, cutting off Yemeni supply lines to the north. By mid-April, press reports described Saudi advances on every front, including operations north of Saada, the Imam's principal northern stronghold.

By May 1934, the conflict reached its climax. Saudi forces pushed deep into the Tihamah coastal plain, capturing Luhayya on 1 May and the major Red Sea port of Hodeida on 4 May. The fall of Hodeida caused widespread alarm among the Yemeni leadership, as it effectively opened the road to Sanaa, the capital. Although the mountainous terrain limited the mobility of Saudi tanks and armored cars, the momentum of the campaign clearly favored the Saudis. Foreign observers noted that while Yemeni troops were more accustomed to mountain warfare, they lacked the modern weaponry and organization possessed by the Saudi forces.

The capture of Hodeida also drew international attention. British naval forces arrived to maintain order, preventing Saudi tribal fighters from looting the city's Indian trading houses, while Italian warships were dispatched to protect Italian interests. The British sloop HMS Penzance evacuated several hundred British, Indian, and foreign residents to the island of Kamaran. Meanwhile, unrest spread through Sanaa, where food shortages and rumors of the Imam's death unsettled the population.

By this stage, the war had revealed the contrasting strengths and weaknesses of the two monarchies. The Saudis, equipped with superior arms and a unified command structure, advanced steadily despite the difficult terrain The Yemenis, though skilled guerrilla fighters, were unable to match the logistical coordination of Ibn Saud's forces. Imam Yahya desperate to preserve his throne appealed to King Fuad of Egypt for mediation while rumors circulated that he had ordered his son to retreat from the western front Reports in the international press reflected the confusion of wartime communications. Some claimed the Imam was preparing a counter-offensive with 200,000 men aimed at Riyadh, though this never materialized. Others suggested the Saudis demanded the Imam's abdication, temporary Saudi control of the disputed borderlands for five years, and the expulsion from Yemen of the deposed rulers of Asir Despite moments of resistance, the Saudi victory was decisive. According to Resort to WarA Data Guide to Inter-State, Extra-State Intra-State, and Non-State Wars 1816–2007, the Saudis effectively won the war by 13 May 1934 having occupied most contested regions and imposed their military supremacy across western Yemen The conflict concluded with the Treaty of Taif, signed later that year, which formally delineated the Saudi–Yemeni border and established a fragile peace that would last for nearly three decades. Though short-lived, the war's impact was profound it secured Saudi Arabia's southern frontier, asserted its dominance over Asir and Najran, and demonstrated the kingdom's

emergence as a regional military power in the Arabian Peninsula In retrospect, the Saudi–Yemeni War of 1934 represented not merely a border conflict, but the final assertion of Ibn Saud's vision for a unified Arabian realm a vision achieved through both diplomacy and decisive warfare. It marked the end of the tribal wars that had shaped the early 20th-century Arabian Peninsula, giving way to a new era of statehood, borders, and geopolitical balance in the region On 12 May 1934, peace negotiations had commenced. Saudi Arabia dropped the demand for Imam Yahya's abdication, but demanded a truce for at least 20 years. It was reported that the Crown prince of Yemen supported the war, while his father the Imam was in favour of peace Ibn Saud claimed that he was not interested in taking over Yemen.

On May 26, it was reported that relations were tense and another outbreak of hostilities was likely. However on 14 June 1934 it was reported that a treaty had been signed between the King and the Imam, guaranteeing 20 years of peace The last Saudi troops left Yemen on 7 July.